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Charles-Marie Widor's Symphonie Romane: An Examination of the Performance Tradition

Kathryn Scheetz
emusikatie@gmail.com

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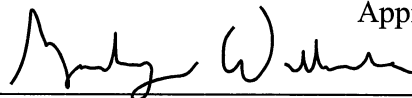
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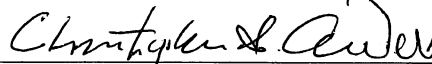
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CHARLES-MARIE WIDOR'S *SYMPHONIE ROMANE*: AN EXAMINATION
OF THE PERFORMANCE TRADITION

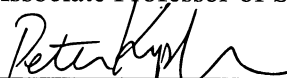
Approved by:



Dr. Zachary Wallmark
Assistant Professor of Musicology



Dr. Christopher S. Anderson
Associate Professor of Sacred Music



Dr. Peter Kupfer
Associate Professor of Musicology

CHARLES-MARIE WIDOR'S *SYMPHONIE ROMANE*: AN EXAMINATION
OF THE PERFORMANCE TRADITION

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of

Meadows School of the Arts

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in

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by

Kathryn Scheetz

B.M., Organ Performance, Indiana University
M.M., Organ Performance, Southern Methodist University

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Scheetz, Kathryn

B.M., Organ Performance, Indiana University, 2015
M.M., Organ Performance, Southern Methodist University, 2018

Charles-Marie Widor's *Symphonie Romane*: An Examination
of the Performance Tradition

Advisor: Dr. Zachary Wallmark

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Charles-Marie Widor, French organist and composer of the well-known Toccata, composed ten “symphonies” for organ. The tenth and final symphony, *Symphonie Romane*, Op. 73 (1900), includes a dedication, “To the Memory of Saint-Sernin of Toulouse.” Modern-day organists seem to take this dedication as a performance directive, studying, playing, and recording the piece on the Aristide Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse. In this thesis, I examine the historical contexts and performance tradition of the piece through ethnographic research, interviews, primary sources, and contemporary writings. I begin with biographical information on Widor and his compositions, placing the composer in the greater historical context of the French organ school in the late nineteenth century. As performer, professor, and composer, Widor held an important position in the French school and influenced many later composers. I discuss his decision to write the ninth and tenth organ symphonies—both based on Gregorian chant themes—and propose several theories. I also examine the close personal and professional relationship between Cavaillé-Coll and Widor. Widor’s music relies heavily on the innovations Cavaillé-Coll included in his instruments and I give specific examples of Widor’s reliance on the new symphonic organs. I consider the organ at Saint-Sernin using a fascinating primary source from 1889, the Saint-Sernin organ committee’s report on the

restoration of the organ by Cavaillé-Coll. To provide some clarity to the question of the dedications, I analyze the differences between the *Symphonie Gothique* and the *Symphonie Romane*, Widor's premieres of the pieces, and his writings on the works. Drawing from my ethnographic research during studies in Toulouse, I identify specific problems when playing the *Symphonie Romane* at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin. This leads to a discussion of the modern performance tradition in light of the historical records previously considered. Many foreign organists have travelled to Toulouse to perform the *Romane* in the Basilica and American organists, interested in the French musical scene since the end of the nineteenth century, have continued this tradition. I include a brief passage on the reception history of Widor's music in both the United States and France. I conclude the thesis with a refutation of the modern performance tradition at the Basilica and propose instead that the piece be viewed as Widor viewed it: as a work of sacred art.

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INTRODUCTION

Ad Memoriam Sancti Saturnini Tolosensis To the Memory of Saint Sernin of Toulouse

When a piece of music includes a dedication written by the composer, is it necessary to pay any attention to the dedication? Should the dedication have any relevance to how the piece is performed? It can be fascinating to learn historical anecdotes about dedications such as Beethoven's hastily removed dedication of the "Eroica" to Napoleon Bonaparte, or to speculate about the meanings implied by musical dedications exchanged between Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms. But how much should a composer's dedication impact where or how a piece should be played? Should a dedicatory phrase carry an implied performance directive?

Before the nineteenth century, musical dedications were often given as a part of the patronage system: a composer indebted to their benefactor could use a dedication on a musical score to express their gratitude. But during the nineteenth century, composers gradually became more independent of the patronage system and dedications often took on a more personal meaning to both the composer and the dedicatee.¹ Many Romantic composers included dedications on their scores and there is great opportunity for research into specific dedications and their contexts and meanings.

¹ See Emily H. Green's "Dedications and the Reception of the Musical Score, 1785-1850" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2009), and her recent book, *Dedicating Music, 1785-1850* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2019).

One composition in particular poses an interesting quandary when looked at in conjunction with modern performance practice traditions: Charles-Marie Widor's *Symphonie Romane*, Op. 73, composed in 1899. Few writings on the *Romane* go beyond a cursory glance at the enigmatic phrase Widor included on the title page and none discuss whether that dedication should be considered when performing the *Symphonie Romane*. The dedication reads *Ad Memoriam Sancti Saturnini Tolosensis*, or, "To the Memory of Saint Sernin of Toulouse" (Figure 1). This would be an odd dedication indeed were it not for the Basilica of Saint Sernin in Toulouse, France, and the knowledge that Widor was familiar with the city. But even this knowledge alone doesn't provide a clear answer to what the dedication means. Most often, it has been interpreted as a performance indication: many organists make pilgrimages to Toulouse and perform and record the work on the 1889 Cavaillé-Coll organ that still exists in the church. By doing this, these musicians seem to suggest that such a performance is a perfect synthesis of the music, the architecture, and the space.

But this is not a unified view, even among organists. Some performers tend to take the dedication at face value and if the opportunity presents itself, to play the work on the organ at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse. Avid scholars of the French organ repertoire, however, agree that the work was not written with that particular instrument in mind and often suggest that Widor was instead thinking of the Cavaillé-Coll organ at the church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, on which he performed and played weekly for over six decades. Modern organ performance practice focuses in great detail on the necessity of playing a piece in a historically accurate manner, according to the characteristics of the instruments contemporary to the music. Scholars and performers acknowledge that the music of certain composers in the French organ school tradition

is closely related to specific instruments and therefore needs to be studied in those contexts.²

This (specifically French) issue calls for further research into the question of why a performance tradition has been created to play the *Romane* in the Toulouse church.

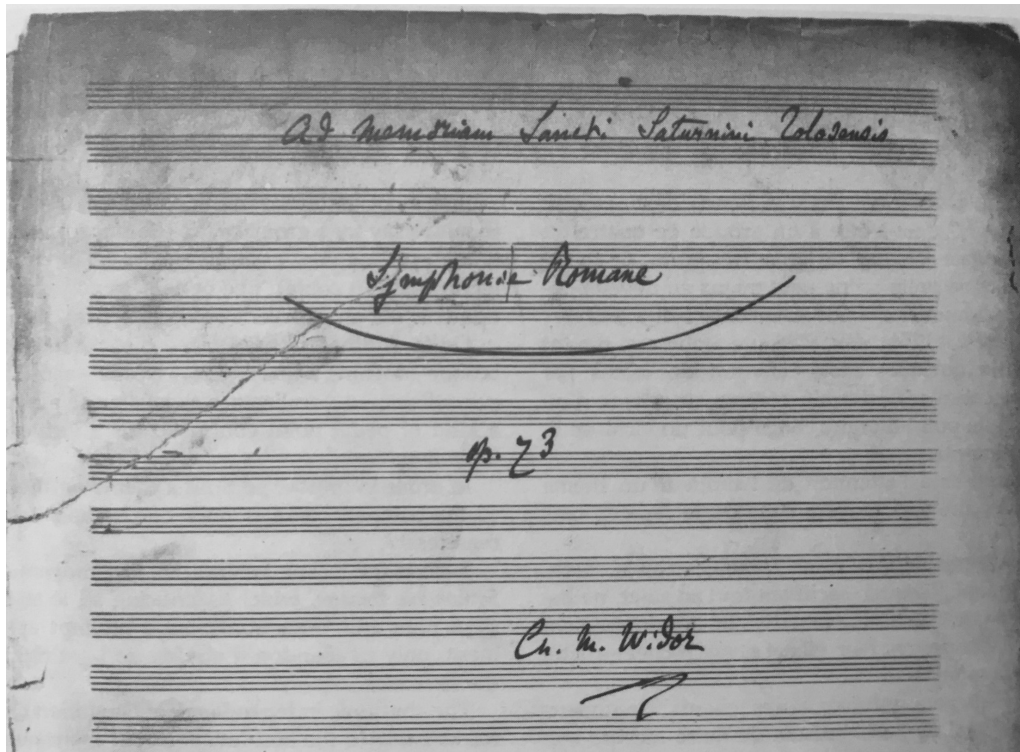


Figure 1: The title page of the Op. 73 autograph manuscript.³

As an American organist who completed my own “pilgrimage” to play the *Romane* at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin, my perspective on the issue changed after studying the piece in 2015 and 2016 with Michel Bouvard, titular organist at the Basilica. These studies gave me insight into why the piece may not have been composed with that instrument in mind. Furthermore, interviews with contemporary organists and scholars from both France and the United States

² Two well-known examples that have been written about in great detail are the organ compositions of Olivier Messiaen in conjunction with the organ at La Trinité and some of the organ music of César Franck in conjunction with the organ at Saint-Clotilde.

³ Charles-Marie Widor, *The Symphonies for Organ: Symphonie romane*, ed. John R. Near, in “Recent Researches in the Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” Vol. 20 (Middleton, Wis.: A-R Editions, 1997), xxiv.

helped me to further explore how and why this performance tradition began. In addition, the 1889 Report on the finished Cavaillé-Coll organ in the Basilica, a unique primary source brought to my attention by Michel Bouvard, piqued my interest in the relationship between Widor's music and Cavaillé-Coll's organs and prompted me to pursue further research in this area.⁴

This thesis examines the performance traditions that have developed around the *Symphonie Romane*, looking first at the historical and cultural settings in which the piece was written. In the past fifty years, many scholars have begun studying Widor's life and compositions in great detail. A significant portion of this resurgence in interest is due to scholar John Near's extensive studies that began as a doctoral dissertation in 1982.⁵ In his exhaustive 2011 biography, *Widor: A Life beyond the Toccata*, Near provides contemporary views and a reception history of Widor and his music, discussing the events and people who helped form him, and presenting Widor's own thoughts on a large number of topics.⁶ Many of the original sources Near consulted are located at the home of Widor's grandniece in Persanges, France, and are otherwise inaccessible, making this biography the foremost work on Widor and an invaluable resource for any study relating to the composer. The many quotes and anecdotes included provide an intimate look at Widor's life, work, and compositions, while placing him in the surrounding historical context and acknowledging his often-overlooked stature as composer. Near provides an extremely rich and detailed narrative and his bibliography contains the most complete listing of all works on Widor written in the last 150 years. The *Symphonie Romane* is given its own chapter and offers the reader a description of its background. Near focuses mainly on when and where Widor composed it and what compositional techniques he used to

⁴ *Rapport de la commission chargée de la vérification et de la réception des travaux* (Toulouse, France: Imprimerie Douladoure-Privat, 1889).

⁵ John Near, "The Life and Work of Charles-Marie Widor," D.M.A. diss. (Boston University, 1985).

⁶ John Near, *Widor: A Life beyond the Toccata* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester, 2011).

incorporate the plainsong chant. The chapter considers the spiritual nature of the work and points out the Wagnerian aspects of the music. Near allots only three sentences to a brief mention of the dedication and the subsequent relationship of the piece with the Saint-Sernin church, leaving the reader desiring a more in-depth analysis of the unusual dedication and the performance tradition that has grown around the composition.

As I contemplated beginning my own thesis on the *Romane*, John Near recommended that I study Jimmy Jess Anthony's dissertation, written in 1986. Anthony's work, entitled "Charles-Marie Widor's *Symphonies pour Orgue*: Their Artistic Contexts and Cultural Antecedents," touches on a few of the issues studied in this thesis yet still doesn't cover the performance tradition of the *Romane*.⁷ He spends a great deal of space looking at the compositional influence of Richard Wagner on Widor's organ music and exploring the musical developments of his organ symphonies, as do John Russell Wilson's 1966 dissertation, "The Organ Symphonies of Charles Marie Widor,"⁸ and Shin-Kyung Bang's 2012 dissertation, "The Evolution of Widor's Compositional Style, as Evidenced in his Ten Organ Symphonies."⁹ In these sources, much space is devoted to tonality in Widor's organ symphonies and obvious Wagnerian influences but none explore questions relating to issues of performance practice in the *Symphonie Romane*.

To date, the most conclusive musical analyses of the *Romane* are found in Lawrence Archbold's essay, "Widor's *Symphonie romane*,"¹⁰ and Ben van Oosten's German biography of

⁷ Jimmy Jess Anthony, "Charles-Marie Widor's *Symphonies pour Orgue*: Their Artistic Contexts and Cultural Antecedents" (DMA diss., University of Rochester, 1986).

⁸ John Russell Wilson, "The Organ Symphonies of Charles Marie Widor," PhD diss. (Florida State University, 1966).

⁹ Shin-Kyung Bang, "The Evolution of Widor's Compositional Style, as Evidenced in his Ten Organ Symphonies" (DMA diss., Indiana University, 2012).

¹⁰ Lawrence Archbold, "Widor's *Symphonie romane*," in *French Organ Music from the Revolution to Franck and Widor*, ed. Lawrence Archbold and William J. Peterson (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1999), 249-74.

the composer, *Charles-Marie Widor: Vater der Orgelsymphonie*.¹¹ Both van Oosten and Archbold examine the compositional techniques Widor used to develop the melodic material, drawn from the Gregorian chant. Guy Bovet's brief 2010 article on the *Romane* postulates a few stimulating theories on the origin of the symphony, but his article, along with van Oosten's book and Archbold's essay, shy away from asking the questions of how and why the performance tradition of playing the *Symphonie Romane* in Toulouse began.¹²

Other research on Widor tends to be more general in nature, including the 2015 documentary by Fugue State Films, *Widor: Master of the Organ Symphony*, which draws heavily from the research of John Near, Gerard Brooks, and Anne-Isabelle de Parcevaux.¹³ In the documentary, Widor's life is investigated in a historical context and many clips of Widor's music are played on Cavaillé-Coll's instruments. The film offers a closer look at Widor's music in conjunction with the instrument at Saint-Sulpice and is a worthwhile resource for anyone wishing to study the composer and his works. The film considers the *Romane* and several anecdotes from the program are discussed later in this thesis.

Anne-Isabelle de Parcevaux's French biography, *Charles-Marie Widor*, takes a slightly different approach by chronologically framing Widor's life within many of his larger compositions, providing short musical examples along the way.¹⁴ Andrew Thomson's biography on Widor from 1987 follows in a similar vein.¹⁵ Here, Thomson studies Widor in a broader context, similar to many of the articles on Widor listed in the bibliography of this thesis. Alain Hobbs's comprehensive French article written for the fiftieth anniversary of Widor's death is a

¹¹ Ben van Oosten, *Charles-Marie Widor: Vater der Orgelsymphonie* (Paderborn: Verlag Peter Ewers, 1997).

¹² Guy Bovet, "La Symphonie Romane de Widor: Regards d'Interprète," *La Tribune de L'Orgue* 62 (2010): 19-22.

¹³ Will Fraser, dir., *Widor: Master of the Organ Symphony* (2015; England: Fugue State Films, 2015), DVD.

¹⁴ Anne-Isabelle de Parcevaux, *Charles-Marie Widor* (Lyon, France: Bleu nuit éditeur, 2015).

¹⁵ Andrew Thomson, *The Life and Times of Charles-Marie Widor, 1844-1937* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

refreshing change of pace, meant to be a musicological sketch rather than a complete study of the musician's life.¹⁶ But once again, all of these writings skirt the specific issue of the *Symphonie Romane*'s enigmatic dedication and the performance tradition at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin. In examining this issue, I aim to add more depth to the rich dialogue surrounding Widor and his works.

Is placing the *Symphonie Romane* at Saint-Sernin and making the music, in a sense, “live” there a modern convention or is there any evidence that Widor might have desired this, based on his dedication? A logical interpretation of the dedication of the *Romane* would make it seem like a performance of the *Romane* in the Basilica of Saint-Sernin would be the most historically accurate setting for the piece. But beyond the dedication, there is no real evidence to lead to that conclusion. Richard Taruskin notes that performers can be in danger of going too far in their search to understand the intent of the composer. To Taruskin, indeed, historical performance practice can actually be a hindrance to understanding the music: “In its attempt to bond with the original intentions that produced the work, it excludes all other intentions.”¹⁷ In his own writings, it seems that Widor was silent regarding any intention for the piece to “live” in the Basilica and although historical documents show that Widor performed the *Romane* in both France and Germany, there is no record of Widor ever playing the work on the organ at Saint-Sernin.¹⁸ Although performers are not bound to blindly follow the will of the composer, one should start with an accurate, historical understanding of the music as a foundation on which to make performance decisions. The tradition of performing Op. 73 in the Basilica of Saint-Sernin practically begs one to study the music, the organ, and the building in conjunction with each

¹⁶ Alain Hobbs, “Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937),” *Cahiers et Mémoires de l’Orgue* 40 (1988): 1-76.

¹⁷ Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 32.

¹⁸ Near, *Widor*, 267.

other. Viewing the performance tradition as an ideological construct allows us to critically examine the modern-day performance practice while seeking an answer to the question of whether the dedication should be taken as a performance direction or if a performance of the work in that space simply allows a performer to experience the piece on an organ contemporary to the music.

In this thesis, I examine the historical contexts surrounding Widor and his *Symphonie Romane* and look at contemporary theories that may enable us to comprehend why this performance tradition has evolved. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the context of the work and its place in music history along with a brief examination of the French organ school during the Romantic era. This provides an important glimpse into the traditions of the French organ school, of which Widor was a seminal figure. The second chapter introduces Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (1811-1899) and his instruments, looking at the organ builder's relationship with Widor as well as the 1889 report given by the Saint-Sernin organ committee. This leads to a study of the *Romane* in conjunction with Cavaillé-Coll's instruments, identifying specific innovations created by the organ-builder that were used to great advantage by the composer and therefore necessary for a performance of the work. The third chapter looks closely at how the *Romane* specifically relates to the organ in the Basilica. I include a comparison with the existing research on the *Symphonie Gothique* (1895), Widor's ninth organ symphony and "companion" piece to the *Romane*, and consider possible Germanic influences on the work. The final chapter examines how modern-day organists have created a tradition around performing this piece in the Basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, France, and questions whether nationalism played a role in Widor's German premiere of the work. By examining the score, Widor's writings, contemporary scholarly research, and the present performance tradition, I consider the main question of

whether one should take this dedication as more than a simple remembrance of a saint. In conclusion, I suggest the idea that perhaps Widor wrote this music to be a sacred work of art rather than composing the piece to be performed in one specific location.

Chapter 1

MUSICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

The musical and historical settings for the *Symphonie Romane* are important considerations in this narrative and provide a necessary foundation for examining the piece. Although many of these details have been recounted in several places, they are necessary in order to accurately place the *Symphonie Romane* in perspective. This chapter provides a brief look at Widor's life and compositional output, an initial examination of the dedication of the *Romane* as it relates to performances of the work, and an overview of French organ music and the French organ school.

Charles-Marie Jean Albert Widor (1844-1937) grew up in a musical family in Lyon, France. As the son of an organist, he began his organ studies at a young age and his musical prowess was quickly noticed and supported by his family and friends. After intense studies in Belgium, Widor moved to Paris where he briefly held a position at the Église de la Madeleine. At the age of twenty-five, Widor became organist at the church of Saint-Sulpice, a distinguished and influential position which he held until four years prior to his death. Widor was often fêted—both during his lifetime and after—as one of the most prominent organists in France, holding teaching positions at the Paris Conservatoire and performing all over France and around Europe. Although he was well-known during his life as an esteemed composer and had a large compositional output in many genres, including orchestral and stage music, he is remembered

almost exclusively for a toccata that has become a cliché in organ music and for his *Technique de l'Orchestre Moderne*, a treatise on orchestration.¹⁹

Throughout the course of his life, Widor wrote ten “symphonies” for organ. As Alain Hobbs remarks, it is important to understand that “Widor himself invented the term ‘Symphony for organ.’”²⁰ The idea of an “organ symphony” was a new concept in the 1870s: prior to Widor’s first four symphonies, the only piece for organ that used the word “symphony” as a descriptor was César Franck’s *Grande Pièce Symphonique* (1860-62), a half-hour, thematically connected work for organ. In 1910, Vincent d’Indy described the *Grande Pièce Symphonique* as “a symphony, since it is the custom to describe in this way a sonata coloured by various *timbres*. ... His *Grande Pièce*, in F sharp minor, is really a symphony in three movements, and displays all the characteristics of this form of composition. ... The whole work is connected by one leading idea.”²¹ But as has been noted by several writers, the word “symphony” was for Widor less a term describing the form of the work and rather “a new sound ideal in organ building, for which the symphony orchestra served as model.”²² John Russell Wilson further explains Widor’s use of the word: “Typically, French orchestral music revolved around color and dynamics—in a word, effects. ... The Cavaillé-Coll organ was capable of producing a similar variety of effects. Its entire forces were directed toward this end. ... Both organ and orchestra are instruments through which composers manipulate colors, dynamics and sonorities.”²³ Widor saw this as “an ideal reciprocity between organ building, performance and composition” where “the nineteenth-century symphony orchestra was the model for this genre ... [while] the organ maintained its

¹⁹ Charles-Marie Widor, *Technique de l'Orchestre Moderne faisant suite au Traité d'instrumentation de H. Berlioz* (Paris: Éditions Henry Lemoine, 1904).

²⁰ Hobbs, “Widor,” 30.

²¹ Vincent d’Indy, *César Franck*, trans. Rosa Newmarch (New York: Dover, 1965), 134-36.

²² Ben van Oosten, liner notes for *Charles-Marie Widor: Complete Organ Works, Vol. 6*, Ben van Oosten, MDG 316 0406-2, CD, 1998, 7.

²³ Wilson, “The Organ Symphonies,” 24; 36.

own character and individuality.”²⁴ As John Near notes, “in searching for a new style, fully conforming to the potential of the Cavaillé-Coll organ, [Widor] seized the grand multi-movement plan of the orchestra symphony. From it he derived a new mode of expression, effectively adapting it to the new sonorities of the organ.”²⁵ In the same way that Wagner was using the expanded resources of the symphony orchestra in his compositions, Widor used the new tonal resources of the symphonic organ in his works.

These new sonorities had been specifically developed by Cavaillé-Coll—although not without some opposition from his contemporaries who labeled the reforms as “disastrous”—to be more orchestral in sound. Cavaillé-Coll defended his choices, saying, “All I aspire to achieve, speaking for myself, is to give the various stops in the organ the tonal character of the orchestral instruments whose names they bear. In my view, strengthening the resemblance between organ stops and the instruments they imitate is improving their quality. ... [This] becomes a resource for the organist to draw upon and heightens the grandeur of liturgical ceremony.”²⁶ The organ builder’s concept for his instruments became an established component used by French organ composers in the nineteenth century. As noted by Near, “not only are the greatest organs of the period due to the industrious genius of Cavaillé-Coll but also, indirectly, the development of a line of organists to play them properly.”²⁷ Norbert Dufourcq, a mid-twentieth century French organist, musicologist, and professor of history at the Paris Conservatoire, supports this view, saying that organists from Widor down to Duruflé and Langlais were in the school of “symphonists who found in the organ of Cavaillé-Coll ... a marvelous interpretation of their

²⁴ van Oosten, Liner notes, 7.

²⁵ John R. Near, “Charles-Marie Widor: The Organ Works and Saint-Sulpice,” *The American Organist* (February, 1993), 51.

²⁶ Fenner Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll and the French Romantic Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 54-55.

²⁷ John R. Near, “Preface” to *The Symphonies for Organ: Symphonie I*, by Charles-Marie Widor (Middleton, Wis.: A-R Editions, 1991), ix.

thought, of their language and their manner of feeling.”²⁸ Corliss Richard Arnold, in his succinct but highly informative book *Organ Literature: A Comprehensive Survey*, states that Cavaillé-Coll encouraged the new symphonic style and “exerted much influence upon the organ writing of such composers as Franck, Widor, Guilmant, Gigout, Dubois, Boëllmann, and Vierne.”²⁹ Arnold cites nearly all of the most acclaimed and influential organ composers of the time. Although it may seem like an exaggeration to declare that the instruments had an effect on the music of so many composers, the Cavaillé-Coll organs were indeed a crucial component of the French symphonic organ genre (discussed in the next chapter). Widor himself shed some light on his conception of the symphonic organ repertoire: “the organ symphony differs from the orchestral symphony. No confusion [*promiscuité*] is to be feared. One will never write indiscriminately for the orchestra or for the organ, but henceforth one will have to exercise the same care with the combination of timbres in an organ composition as in an orchestral work.”³⁰ Widor thus wrote his organ symphonies not merely in imitation of the orchestral genre but rather as a way to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by the greatly expanded, highly expressive instruments.

The first four symphonies (published together in 1872 by Maho) are suites of mostly unrelated pieces—probably written at various points—rather than fully-developed works in a symphonic form with thematically related material.³¹ The fifth and sixth symphonies (published in 1879 by Hamelle) and the seventh and eighth symphonies (published in 1887 by Hamelle) more closely resemble the orchestral concept of a symphony with their highly expressive nature and a more unified, multimovement structure. But it is the ninth and tenth symphonies that truly

²⁸ Norbert Dufourcq, *La Musique d'Orgue Française de Jehan Titelouze à Jehan Alain* (Paris: Librairie Floury, 1949), 139. Translation mine.

²⁹ Corliss Richard Arnold, *Organ Literature: A Comprehensive Survey*, 3rd ed., Vol. I, *Historical Survey* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 199.

³⁰ Charles-Marie Widor, “Avant-propos,” in *Complete Organ Symphonies: Series I*, by Charles-Marie Widor, ed. John R. Near (New York: Dover, 1991), xxxii.

³¹ John Near capably substantiates this view in *Widor: A Life beyond the Toccata*, Chapter 30.

fulfill Widor's concept of a symphony for organ through the use of orchestral colors and expression along with a musically unified form. The *Symphonie Gothique*, Op. 70 (1895), and *Symphonie Romane*, Op. 73 (1900), are often regarded as some of his best writing for organ. In both works, Widor exhibits his compositional maturity while using, for the first time in his organ music, Gregorian chant tunes as predominant themes. The *Symphonie Romane* is based on a single chant: the *Haec dies* Easter gradual (Figure 2). Similar to Wagner's use of a *leitmotif*, the chant is transposed, paraphrased, used and re-used throughout the entire work. It is Widor's use of this one main theme that creates a cohesive work with movements that are both motivically and musically related.

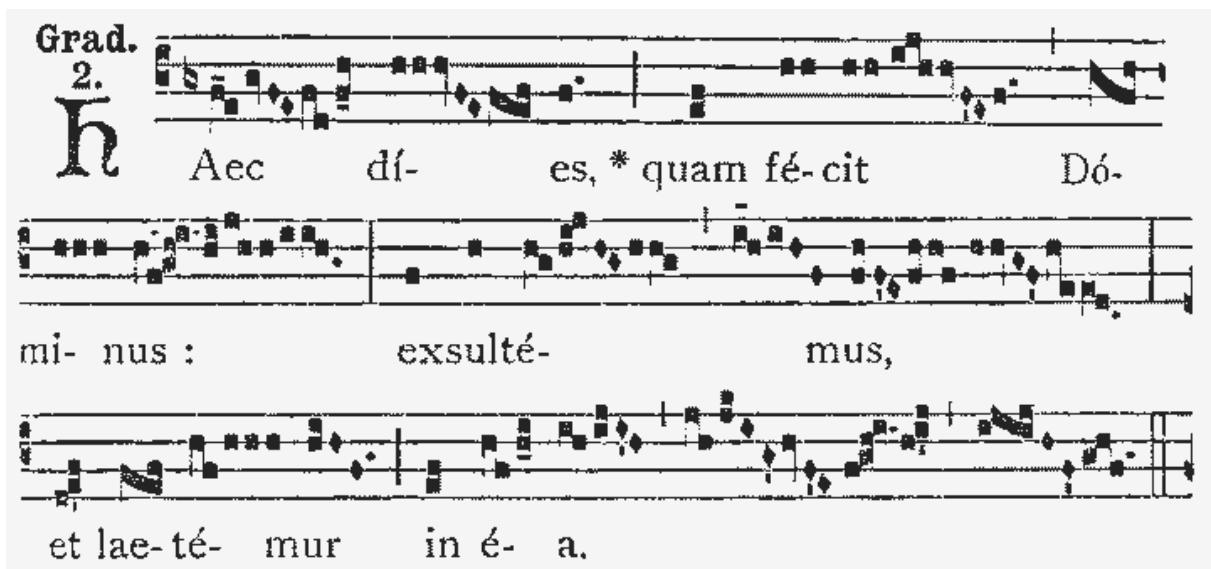


Figure 2: The Easter gradual *Haec dies*

Widor's "Avant-propos" to the *Romane*, his preface to the work, gives insight on his thoughts regarding the musical setting of the plainchant and also provides a succinct introduction to performance practice for the work. Widor describes the *Haec dies* chant as "an elegant arabesque adorning a text of a few words—about ten notes per syllable—a vocalization as

elusive as a bird's song, a kind of pedal point conceived for a virtuoso free of limitation.”³² This colorful description of the piece goes on to talk about the use of Gregorian chant in regards to the form of the piece: “The rhythmic independence of Gregorian chant conforms badly to the absolutism of our metronomic measure. Is there anything more delicate than to transcribe in modern notation the vocalizations of a Gradual or an Alleluia? So one turns to spoken explanations and commentaries for it: *Quasi recitative, rubato, espressivo, a piacere*, etc.”³³ Widor includes several visualizations of how the theme could be rhythmically transcribed to demonstrate his point (Figure 3). Although the gradual is in mode 2, Widor views the chant as already in “our modern scale: two relative keys: D Major, F# minor,” and sets it accordingly.³⁴



Figure 3: Three rhythmic variants of the first phrase of *Haec dies* in modern notation³⁵

Widor provides guidance on interpretation when he mentions “the inexpressible suppleness of [the Gregorian chant], and even the free character” which is mimicked in the

³² Charles-Marie Widor, “Avant-propos,” in *The Symphonies for Organ: Symphonie romane*, by Charles-Marie Widor, ed. John R. Near (Middleton, Wis.: A-R Editions, 1997), xxiii.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Charles-Marie Widor, *Initiation Musicale* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1923), 109. Translation mine. See Lawrence Archbold’s essay “Widor’s *Symphonie Romane*” for a comprehensive study of Widor’s use of the *Haec dies* chant in this work.

³⁵ Widor, “Avant-propos,” in *Symphonie romane*, xxiii.

opening, but later, when it “becomes an integral part of the polyphony, one must execute it strictly in time without attenuation of any kind ... [the theme] has become the possession of the composer who has chosen it.”³⁶ It is only in the *Cantilène*, the third movement of the *Romane*, where Widor disrupts his chosen theme. Here, he includes the *Victimae paschali laudes* Easter sequence as the melody with accompanying flourishes from the *Haec dies* motifs.

The purpose of this chapter is not to analyze the music, chord by chord, but a general description of the music is in order. The symphony itself is just under thirty-five minutes in length and is comprised of four movements: *Moderato*, *Choral*, *Cantilène*, and *Final*. The first movement begins with a melismatic, improvisatory line, punctuated by pedal tones to accompany the playing of the *Haec dies* theme in the left hand (Figure 4).



Figure 4: movement 1, measures 1-5

During this movement, the theme moves around to various locations in the texture; appearing in the pedals, then in the tenor voice, then at the top of the keyboard before the climax

³⁶ Ibid.

of the movement, where the theme is played in double pedals at the octave. Although the movement becomes quieter toward the end, the fast, toccata-like figurations that continue all the way to the end of this movement foreshadow the *Final* movement.

The second movement is aptly titled *Choral*: the beginning, marked *Adagio*, is a chorale setting with a strictly contrapuntal version of the theme at its original pitch level, interspersed by a free, improvisatory pedal line (Figure 5). The middle section features the theme again at the top of the keyboard, with inner voices imitating the theme's movement underneath the longer held notes of the chant. The longest section of the second movement has a soaring countertheme in the soprano against sustained arpeggiated chords in the left-hand accompaniment with the theme prominently placed in the placidly moving pedal lines. Widor finishes the movement by bringing back snippets of the middle section, this time in a more homophonic way.

Adagio (♩ = 80)

3

cresc.

p

5

P

R

Péd. GPR *f*

Figure 5: movement 2, measures 1-7

The *Cantilène* movement features a solo Clarinette line which hints at the *Haec dies* theme before stating the *Victimae paschali* Easter sequence, transposed up a third. The brief middle section features a chorale-like setting of the second phrase of the sequence. The movement ends as it began, with the solo line singing out the *Victimae paschali* theme.

The last movement, *Final*, features the chant theme in several settings and is (as could be expected) a true French toccata movement that almost never gives the performer a chance to relax. At the beginning, the chant is heard in straight eighth notes in the *Allegro* 12/8 time signature (Figure 6). The piece builds in intensity, coming to a climax three times before the poignant and unexpectedly quiet ending, which borrows and only slightly alters the first phrase of the symphony to wind down the entire work.

Allegro (♩. = 112)

GPR { *fff*

The musical score consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows measures 1 and 2. The second system shows measures 3 and 4. The third system shows measures 5 and 6. The solo line is in the treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the grand staff. The tempo is Allegro with a quarter note equal to 112 beats per minute. The dynamics are marked GPR (Grand Piano) and fff (fortissimo). The score shows measures 1 through 5, with measure numbers 3 and 6 indicated at the start of their respective staves.

Figure 6: movement 4, measures 1-5

Post-Classical/Pre-Romantic French organ music

A brief discussion of the French organ composers who preceded Widor is necessary in order to understand the importance of Widor's organ symphonies. Much has been written about the state of French music in the century preceding Widor, with scholars agreeing that the quality of French music had greatly decreased after the French Classical period (1660-1740).³⁷ In 1917, one Frenchman went so far as to declare that "It may be said without exaggeration that from the death of Rameau [1764] up to about 1870, French music ceased to exist."³⁸ Concerning organ music, Dufourcq describes the situation in more detail, saying that "It was the era of the lyrical drama, which flatters the senses more than the mind, supplanting the traditional polyphonic forms," an era in which he claimed that "the organ lost its sacred character; from the liturgical that it had been, it passed to the secular world, and the artists devoted to it were no more than virtuosos often without soul."³⁹ Although Dufourcq uses harsh language to describe organists of this era, his description of the widespread move away from the sacred character of organ music is accurate.

In this period, French organ music consisted mostly of short, simple noels and picturesque works that were customarily improvised. These works were often overly-dramatic apocryphal pieces, music that sonically depicted storms, cataclysmic events, or the Last Judgement—in the latter case, often using the *Judex crederis* text as a basis for the improvisation. For example, these pieces would feature the organist stomping on the lowest

³⁷ To peruse this subject in more depth, see Norbert Dufourcq's account in *La Musique d'Orgue Française de Jehan Titelouze à Jehan Alain*, Orpha Ochse's thorough study in *Organists and Organ Playing in Nineteenth-Century France and Belgium*, Lawrence Archbold and William J. Peterson's selection of essays in *French Organ Music from the Revolution to Franck and Widor*, and John Near's discussion of the subject in *Widor: A Life beyond the Toccata*, Chapters 6-10.

³⁸ Georges Jean Aubry, *An Introduction to French Music*, trans. Percy Alfred Scholes (London: C. Palmer & Hayward, 1917), 30.

³⁹ Dufourcq, *La Musique d'Orgue*, 106. Translation mine.

pedal notes to evoke thunder or engaging the *chamade* trumpets to imitate the blowing of the last trumpets at the end of time.⁴⁰ During the French Revolution, many churches were seized and nationalized and the organs were often saved only because the organists renounced their sacred duties in favor of playing popular music—such as *La Marseillaise*—or improvisations on battle scenes for the regular non-religious festivals and events, such as Napoleon’s famous celebratory dinner at Saint-Sulpice.⁴¹ Dufourcq notes the irony of the situation: “Never before has secular art prostituted religious art to this extent... Never before has secular art served religious art so well...”

Even after the revolution, it took more than half a century for French composers to begin writing more serious organ music. As Dufourcq laments, from the vantage point of a century later, mediocre music was *de rigueur* in Paris in the mid-1800s, and thanks to the organists at most of the prominent churches, “never has organ music been so poor.”⁴² He then pointedly asks the question, “has organ music ever resisted such a test?”⁴³ Individual French musicians in the 1800s also acknowledged the poor quality of the music being produced after the revolution and in 1871, the Société Nationale de Musique was formed. This group was led by prominent musicians such as Camille Saint-Saëns, César Franck, Gabriel Fauré, and others, and Widor was one of the early members.⁴⁴ The Société provided leadership and direction to French musicians in an effort to replace trite music with “works reflecting a more serious French musical style.”⁴⁵ Michael Strasser, in his article on the Société Nationale, explains that this group judged it their

⁴⁰ Ibid., 119.

⁴¹ Orpha Ochse, *Organists and Organ Playing in Nineteenth-Century France and Belgium* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 3-6.

⁴² Dufourcq, *La Musique d’Orgue*, 127. Translation mine.

⁴³ Ibid., 130. Translation mine.

⁴⁴ Near, *Widor*, 53.

⁴⁵ Michael Strasser, “The Société Nationale and Its Adversaries: The Musical Politics of *L’Invasion germanique* in the 1870s,” *19th-Century Music* 24, no. 3 (Spring 2001), 236.

“duty to study new techniques and to assimilate them into their own style,” focusing particularly on the “serious” music of their German counterparts.⁴⁶ Indeed, Franck and Widor’s own use of the term “symphony,” with its Germanic origins, demonstrates the influence from the compositions of contemporary German musicians, particularly Beethoven, Liszt, and Wagner.⁴⁷

Both individually and collectively, composers sought to regain lost intellectual ground in sacred and secular spheres and it was around the time of Widor that French organ music, in particular, was becoming a more serious endeavor. During Widor’s lifetime, one author named him as one of the principal French composers who “must be mentioned for their collective share in the phenomenal revivifying of French instrumental music, which, save for Berlioz, had been almost inactive in the eighteenth century.”⁴⁸ Widor was clearly aware of the theatrical style of the preceding generation and he was not impressed, even going so far as to remove the *tonnerre* pedal⁴⁹ from the organ at Saint-Sulpice.⁵⁰ Near points out that “to Widor, the predominantly vapid style of French organ music during the previous 100 years was something of an embarrassment. Practically none of his contemporaries, with the notable exception of César Franck—whose *Six Pièces* were published in 1868—had produced any serious organ music. Genuinely devoted to the music of Bach, Widor aspired to reidentify the organ with the nearly forgotten but solid traditions of the past. Widor was no mere imitator, however; he sought to

⁴⁶ Ibid., 238.

⁴⁷ For an in-depth discussion on this topic, see Richard Taruskin’s “Chapter 14 The Symphony Goes (Inter)National,” in *The Oxford History of Western Music, Vol. 3: Music in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴⁸ Edward Burlingame Hill, *Modern French Music* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), 41.

⁴⁹ The *tonnerre* pedal was designed to produce, via a simple lever, a thunder sound. This lever made the lowest notes of the organ pedal board speak, sounding whichever stops were drawn in any particular moment.

⁵⁰ Wallace Goodrich, *The Organ in France* (Boston: Boston Music Co., 1917; Portland, Maine: Longwood Press, 1976), 41.

restore greatness to the instrument in the new language of the nineteenth-century Cavaillé-Coll organ,” the “symphonic” language.⁵¹

Widor as pedagogue and proponent of Bach

Widor’s second métier of choice, that of pedagogue, was equally important as his compositional career. Immediately following the unexpected death of César Franck in 1890, Widor was appointed professor of organ at the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 46. He took the organ classes of Franck and reformed them during the six years in which he taught the class at the Conservatoire, greatly influencing the next generation of French organists. Several of his organ students recalled the great rigor and precision with which Widor taught as he spent hours with each student, scrutinizing every aspect of the pieces studied, the students’ performances, and their improvisations.⁵² This style of teaching contrasted greatly with Franck’s method, one which Widor regarded as having neglected the instruction of performance and repertoire as Franck focused mainly on improvisation.⁵³ Entrance into Widor’s organ class was quite competitive, attracting many foreign students, including American organists (many of whom subsequently performed Widor’s music in America). In his capacity as organ professor, Widor placed great importance on the performance and analysis of Bach’s organ works, introducing Bach’s chorale preludes for organ to many of his students and colleagues, as well as to Ambroise Thomas, director of the Conservatoire.⁵⁴ Upon the death of Thomas in February 1896 and the subsequent rearrangement of the Paris Conservatoire faculty, Widor applied for and received the position of composition professor. In this new position, where he remained until 1927, Widor exerted even

⁵¹ Near, “Charles-Marie Widor,” 51.

⁵² Ochse, *Organists*, 184-88.

⁵³ Near, *Widor*, 195-96.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 202.

more influence on the next generation of musicians. Several of his most notable students were Nadia Boulanger, Zoltán Kodály, Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Edgar Varèse, Marcel Dupré, Maurice Duruflé, and Olivier Messiaen.

Similar to Mendelssohn in Germany and England, Widor played a significant role in bringing Bach's music into the French public sphere. Through Widor's own performances and teaching, the next generation of French organists came to recognize the importance of Bach's œuvre. Widor even touted a (now obviously spurious) direct pedagogical lineage back to Bach.⁵⁵ But more than simply re-introducing Bach's compositions in France, Widor was profoundly captivated by Bach's use of music as sacred art—music based on sacred texts or themes—and this had a direct impact on his own compositions and especially on the Ninth and Tenth Symphonies.

The organ works of Bach played such a momentous role in Widor's life that he, together with his student Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), published an eight-volume edition of the organ works. This edition was executed at the request of G. Schirmer and the first five volumes were published beginning in 1912. Widor viewed the final three volumes as especially "urgent" because they contained the chorale preludes along with the corresponding texts in German, French, and English (they were eventually published only fourteen years after his death).⁵⁶ Bach's compositions continued to have a lasting effect on Widor, as Schweitzer related that Widor consequently viewed only works based on sacred themes—such as his last two organ symphonies—and a few select compositions by Bach as "holy."⁵⁷ Even leaving aside the blatant parallels Schweitzer was drawing between Widor and Bach, it is clear that at this point in his life,

⁵⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 315.

⁵⁷ Charles R. Joy, *Music in the Life of Albert Schweitzer* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951), 174.

Widor viewed his two chant-based symphonies in a different light than his eight earlier symphonies.

The decision to write the Ninth and Tenth Symphonies

At the time of their publication in 1887, Widor regarded his Seventh and Eighth Organ Symphonies as his final large-scale works for organ. Out of all ten, they are both the longest two and the most difficult and Widor described them as “the end of the organ symphonies” and as “the last two symphonies.”⁵⁸ Near captures the importance Widor accorded these two works as follows: “Widor seemed to have exhausted the possibilities of his instrument, as well as his own compositional technique. The Eighth represented the ultimate achievement in the art of organ composition at the time.”⁵⁹ He then refers to an 1892 article that published a quote by Widor, stating that the composer had “renounced writing for the organ” after completing these two works.⁶⁰ The question, then, of why Widor wrote Symphonies no. 9 and no. 10 has been posed by multiple scholars. Anne-Isabelle de Parcevaux responds by stating that two factors motivated the composer to begin writing again for organ: his appointment at the Paris Conservatoire as organ professor, and his experience playing on the new Saint-Ouen Cavaillé-Coll instrument.⁶¹

Others have speculated that perhaps because Widor was financially established at this point in his life, he was not pressed by monetary needs to market the scores of the *Gothique* and the *Romane*.⁶² In looking concurrently at Widor’s compositional output and his official posts, Alain Hobbs concludes that Widor composed to make his living [il composa *pour gagner sa vie*]

⁵⁸ Near, *Widor*, 180-81.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 182.

⁶¹ Fraser, dir., *Widor: Master of the Organ Symphony*, Part II.

⁶² Christophe Mantoux, conversation with author, December 4, 2018.

in the years prior to 1880. Hobbs includes the important distinction that “Widor composed also *to please*,” underlining the fact that between 1870 and 1880, Widor published his compositions regularly and rapidly.⁶³ But after 1880, the year he founded the *Concordia* society and became its director, the rate at which he composed dramatically fell.⁶⁴ Widor’s appointment to the Paris Conservatoire in 1890 would also add many additional demands on his time. But as a result of these appointments, and particularly the 1893 composition professorship which doubled his salary, Widor was most likely no longer in a position where he was obliged to depend on his published compositions as a means of support.⁶⁵ As Fannie Edgar Thomas clarified to her American readership in 1893, “Although the professorship emolument is ridiculously small in our eyes, the honor with which it endows the incumbent gives him the power to become rich through private class prices.”⁶⁶ If one takes into account the many organ recitals Widor gave, including both dedication recitals for Cavaillé-Coll’s new instruments and regular guest recital appearances around Europe, the resounding popularity of his other compositions such as stage music and orchestral works (his 1880 ballet *La Korrigane*, for example, was performed at the Paris Opera one hundred times by 1886),⁶⁷ and the subsequent sale of the scores, it is reasonable to conclude that Widor was making a comfortable salary. For a composer in Widor’s situation, the decision to write these symphonies may perhaps have been as simple as a desire to write pieces solely for himself, no longer swayed by monetary necessity or public opinion. This hypothesis gains strength when we look at Widor’s life and compositional output: at the age of fifty-one, Widor had already composed the vast majority of his major works. John Near observes

⁶³ Hobbs, “Charles-Marie Widor,” 29.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Near, *Widor*, 244.

⁶⁶ Fannie Edgar Thomas, “Organ Loft Whisperings,” *The Musical Courier* 28 (no. 6, February 7, 1894), in *Organ Loft Whisperings: The Paris Correspondence of Fannie Edgar Thomas, 1893-1894*, compiled and edited by Agnes Armstrong (New York: Sticuit Tuum Productions, 2003), 90.

⁶⁷ Near, *Widor*, 160.

that from 1895 onwards, what he calls the “twilight of Widor’s compositional career,” Widor only wrote approximately two dozen more substantial works, even though he lived another forty-two years.⁶⁸

But perhaps age was a factor in his decision to write these works: Widor was fifty when he composed the *Gothique* and fifty-five when the *Romane* was completed. Guy Bovet, a Swiss organist and prolific author on organ subjects, observes that in that era, a person at the age of fifty-five was already old: “It is perfectly legitimate that a composer of this age would throw himself into that which could be considered a musical testament. Widor didn’t know that he would live 37 more years. ... He might then think about death and question what would be after death. In the light of the death and the resurrection of Christ, such is the purpose of the *Symphonie Romane*.”⁶⁹

Through Widor’s use of Gregorian chant, these two symphonies show the composer turning towards the sacred. As described by Near, with the composition of the *Gothique*, “A new style and ideal in organ music was ushered in—one that turned to Gregorian plainsong and thereby exhaled a particularly spiritual aura.”⁷⁰ The *Gothique* was one of Widor’s favorite organ works and he played movements from it twice a year at Saint-Sulpice, on All Saints’ Day and, more famously, at the Christmas Midnight Mass.⁷¹ The use of Gregorian chant, as mentioned earlier, was a significant departure from his earlier compositions for organ and contemporary writers acknowledged that this was indeed a new concept in the organ literature.⁷² Although his Symphony no. 2 includes a fourth movement based on the *Salve Regina* antiphon, this movement

⁶⁸ Ibid., 226.

⁶⁹ Bovet, “La Symphonie Romane,” 19. Translation mine.

⁷⁰ Near, *Widor*, 226.

⁷¹ Ibid., 230.

⁷² *Ménestral* 61, no. 18 (May 5, 1895): 144.

was added much later in the 1901 revision, thus marking the *Gothique* as the first instance of Widor's use of sacred music as a basis for an organ work. While he incorporates a chant theme only in the final movement of the *Gothique*, the *Romane* goes even further. Widor not only includes the chant theme in every movement but also extracts the major themes of the entire symphony from the chant's musical phrases.

Widor's symphonies for organ had a far-reaching impact on his students and thus on the future of French organ music. For example, Louis Vierne took the symphonic idea and developed it even further in his own organ symphonies, culminating in his Fifth (1925) and Sixth (1930) Symphonies. Both the cyclical nature of the themes and the strict counterpoint in the works show Widor's influence on Vierne. Marcel Dupré was also inspired by Widor and, like the *Romane*, Dupré's *Symphonie Passion*, Op. 23 (1921), is built around Gregorian chant themes, using a different chant in each movement.⁷³ And even Alexandre Guilmant, a close colleague of Widor, may have been influenced by Widor's use of the term "symphony" when he referred to his own Eighth Organ Sonata (1907) as his "second symphony."⁷⁴

As an organist reaching his musical maturity in the second half of the nineteenth century, Widor was well aware of his inherited musical lineage: on one side, the vacuous, improvisational tradition of the French organists; on the other, the lofty, intellectual counterpoint of the revered German organist, J. S. Bach. Even in looking solely at Widor's ten organ symphonies, it is clear that his compositional output makes him one of the most important links between French organ music of the 1800s and that of the 1900s.

⁷³ For a musical analysis of the use of Gregorian chant in the works of both Widor and Dupré, see Paul Lindsley Thomas' 1979 dissertation titled, "Gregorian Chant in the Organ Symphonies of Widor and Dupré."

⁷⁴ Guilmant's first "symphony" was the composer's own reworking of his organ Sonata no. 1, Op. 42, for organ and orchestra (1878).

The dedication of the *Symphonie Romane*

The very idea of dedicating a work is an intriguing concept. A dedication, by its very existence, creates connections to something outside of the dedicated work. As described by Gérard Genette in his *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*,

Whoever the official addressee, there is always an ambiguity in the destination of a dedication, which is always intended for at least two addressees: the dedicatee, of course, but also the reader, for dedicating a work is a public act that the reader is, as it were, called on to witness. ... The dedication always is a matter of demonstration, ostentation, exhibition: it proclaims a relationship, whether intellectual or personal, actual or symbolic, and this proclamation is always at the service of the work, as a reason for elevating the work's standing or as a theme for commentary.⁷⁵

In the case of the *Symphonie Romane*, musicians have often seemed to view the dedication as creating both a symbolic and a literal relationship between the work and the location. The dedication of the piece is curious both in and of itself and when compared to Widor's other dedicated works. The size of Widor's œuvre has not been definitely determined, but is nonetheless staggering, numbering well over 300 pieces. Including the unpublished manuscripts, there are a total of 111 dedications on various musical works. One hundred and three of the dedications are to individuals or couples—often musicians, personal friends, or well-known members of society. Five of these dedications were to groups of people, such as the dedication to the *Société Philharmonique de Londres* on Widor's *Walpurgisnacht* symphonic poem (1880). One dedication, on Widor's first symphony for orchestra, was to the *Répertoire de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire*, which performed two movements from the work in 1873: this society was a symphony comprised of conservatory professors and students and was the predecessor to the Orchestre de Paris.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 134-35.

⁷⁶ Arthur Dandelot, *La Société des Concerts du Conservatoire (1928-1923)* (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1923), 69.

But of all these dedications, only two are in Latin: the rather enigmatic dedications on the *Symphonie Gothique* and *Symphonie Romane*. When one considers the use of the Latin-language Gregorian chant in these works, it seems justifiable to include a dedication in Latin. The dedication on the *Gothique* symphony reads “Ad memoriam Sancti Andoëni Rothomagensis” (To the Memory of Saint Ouen of Rouen), using the Latin name for Saint Audoin, formerly the bishop of Rouen. The *Romane*’s dedication is similarly inscribed “Ad memoriam Sancti Saturnini Tolosensis” and is present on the autograph manuscript, as we have seen.⁷⁷

In both cases, modern-day organists have viewed the dedications almost as performance indications, often playing the works on the Cavaillé-Coll organs in the respective churches. In the case of the *Gothique*, Widor fulfilled his promise to the parish priest to compose a piece “in honor of his remarkable church” of Saint-Ouen and Widor himself gave the premiere of the work at the Abbatale Saint-Ouen in Rouen in 1895.⁷⁸

However, in the case of the *Romane*, there is no such neat history tying the music so directly to the Basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse: there is no indication that Widor ever performed the work at the Basilica. In fact, the premiere of the entire work was performed by Widor, in January 1900, on the Sauer organ—a German instrument—in the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin. Widor played the unpublished work in a concert of organ music but not much else is known about this performance. In stark contrast to the well-documented and descriptive review of Widor’s first performance of the *Gothique* five years earlier, Near remarks that in the surviving correspondences, Widor states only that the *Romane* “went very well.”⁷⁹ It

⁷⁷ Of Widor’s ten organ symphonies, only portions of the *Romane* autograph manuscript exist. See John Near’s “Introduction” in *The Symphonies for Organ: Symphonie romane*, by Charles-Marie Widor (Middleton, Wis.: A-R Editions, 1997), ix.

⁷⁸ *Ménestral* 61, no. 18, 143-44.

⁷⁹ Near, *Widor*, 267.

is unknown if Widor ever publicly performed the *Symphonie Romane* in the Saint-Sernin Basilica. We do know that he did not inaugurate the new Cavaillé-Coll organ there; that privilege was accorded to Alexandre Guilmant in 1889.

Even though Widor was not tasked with inaugurating this organ, he visited Toulouse on multiple occasions, inaugurating other instruments in the city. For example, in 1868, Widor traveled to Toulouse to inaugurate the *orgue de chœur* in the Cathedral of Saint-Étienne in Toulouse, a new Cavaillé-Coll instrument.⁸⁰ Located less than a mile from the Cathedral, the Basilica—an important pilgrimage site since the 1200s and one of the most distinctive landmarks in the city—would have been an obvious place to visit while in Toulouse. One can imagine a twenty-four-year-old Widor encountering the Basilica and being struck by the grand beauty of the architecture. In 1888, Widor came back to Toulouse to inaugurate another organ, the Puget organ in Notre-Dame de la Dalbade on November 22.⁸¹ These particular three instruments are still located in the original buildings, in working condition, and available for practice and performance. This synthesis of both time—having access to the original instrument itself—and place is remarkable in the discussion of historical performances as it creates quite a bit of similarity to what Widor would have experienced spatially, sonically, and architecturally. Perhaps this is part of the reason why the performance tradition of playing the *Romane* in the Basilica of Saint-Sernin has evolved, as I will discuss in the final chapter.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 456.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Chapter 2

CAVAILLÉ-COLL AND WIDOR IN THE FRENCH ORGAN TRADITION

As a prominent performer, composer, and professor at the Paris Conservatoire, Widor is an integral link between the organ music of the 1800s and the music written after the turn of the century. But it would be naïve to study Widor's importance in the French organ school without taking into consideration the work of another remarkably talented individual: Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (1811-1899). In this chapter, we will look more closely at the relationship between Widor and Cavaillé-Coll, one which provided many remarkable opportunities for the young organist's career. It is unmistakably clear that the connection between the organ builder and the artist was fruitful for the careers of both men, as has been noted by other authors. But in order to more fully examine Widor and his *Symphonie Romane*, it is crucial to look at both his relationship with Cavaillé-Coll and at the organs of the period to understand the revolutionary technical innovations included in Cavaillé-Coll's organs, instruments which Widor performed on regularly throughout his entire life.

The Cavaillé family were well known organ builders in southern France and Catalonia since the mid-1700s. Both Aristide's father, Dominique-Hyacinthe Cavaillé-Coll (1771-1862), and grandfather, Jean-Pierre Cavaillé (1743-1809), frequently moved between the two areas, but it was Dominique who settled his family in Toulouse in 1827, giving his two sons the opportunity to receive a formal education in a big city.⁸² The organ-building firm, Cavaillé-Coll

⁸² Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 9.

Père et Fils, was comprised of Dominique, Aristide, and Dominique's older son, Vincent (1808-1886). Aristide, as a fourth-generation organ builder, was an innovator from an early age and, together with his father and brother, invented the *Poikilorgue* around 1830. It was this instrument, a free-reed organ that was an early version of a harmonium, that caught the attention of Gioachino Rossini in 1832 at a performance of Giacomo Meyerbeer's year-old opera, *Robert le Diable*, in Toulouse.⁸³ Rossini encouraged Cavaillé-Coll to go to Paris to work as an organ builder and provided the aspiring entrepreneur with letters of introduction to prominent members of the Paris elite and to four Parisian organ building firms.⁸⁴ One year after this fortuitous meeting, the twenty-two-year-old Cavaillé-Coll journeyed to the capital where he quickly became famous.

In Paris, Aristide Cavaillé-Coll was a nobody: a provincial organ-builder newly come to the capital to seek his fortune. Through one of Rossini's connections, the young builder learned of a last-minute opportunity to enter the competition to build a new organ at the Basilica of Saint-Denis. Fenner Douglass points out that this was not just another church organ to be built: "The ancient basilica of Saint-Denis ... was to be entirely restored at government expense. The organ would be the largest and most prestigious in France."⁸⁵ It has been further described by scholars Jesse Eschbach and Lawrence Archbold as "one of the most prestigious instruments to be built in France in nearly a hundred years."⁸⁶ In three days, Aristide came up with an innovative and audacious design for the new instrument and was awarded the contract. This

⁸³ *Robert le Diable* was the first opera to call for the use of an organ and, since opera halls generally do not have organs, the *Poikilorgue* was rented and used for this performance.

⁸⁴ Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 10.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Jesse E. Eschbach and Lawrence Archbold, "Aristide Cavaillé-Coll: Master of Masters," in *The Organ as a Mirror of its Time: North European Reflections, 1610-2000*, ed. Kerala J. Snyder (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 232.

auspicious and highly unlikely scenario not only launched Cavaillé-Coll's successful career in Paris but was also the beginning of what would become a new style of organ building: the French Romantic symphonic organ.⁸⁷

The organ at Saint-Denis has been described by Fenner Douglass as an eclectic instrument, "an odd combination of classical requirements with eccentric 'modern improvements.'"⁸⁸ Early on in the planning stages, Cavaillé-Coll's proposals included several innovative and experimental items among more common features.⁸⁹ For instance, he offered newly designed bellows that allowed a steady wind supply for different wind pressures; more overblown harmonic stops than normal; a solution for lessening the necessarily heavy key actions in large instruments; and an extension of the enclosed division and improvements to make it more expressive than it would otherwise have been.⁹⁰ But the most radical feature of the instrument was Aristide's promise of making a five-manual instrument playable with all the manuals coupled.⁹¹

A brief discussion of mechanics

In order to fully comprehend the groundbreaking developments Cavaillé-Coll was suggesting, it is necessary to include a short description of the mechanics of the instrument. When an organist

⁸⁷ In spite of the fact that not all of Cavaillé-Coll's instruments can truly be called "symphonic organs," the organ builder's evolution away from the organs of the Classical period and towards his symphonic instruments is evident from the beginning. See Daniel Roth and Pierre-François Dub-Attenti's booklet *The Neoclassical Organ and the Great Aristide Cavaillé-Coll Organ of Saint-Sulpice, Paris*, trans. George Baker and Michael Eddyshaw (London: Rhinegold, 2014), and Michał Szostak's article "Evolution of Cavaillé-Coll's symphonic organ," *The Organ* 384 (Spring 2018): 8-23.

⁸⁸ Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 13.

⁸⁹ The following items were presented by Cavaillé-Coll in the January 10, 1834, revision to the October 7, 1833, original contract.

⁹⁰ Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 19.

⁹¹ The instrument was eventually completed in 1841 with only three manuals playing four divisions. Although not quite as large as originally proposed, three manuals playing seventy stops would still have been almost unplayable without an assist when all three manuals were coupled together.

depresses a key on a tracker organ, she mechanically opens—via a series of levers, thin pieces of wood, wires, and other materials—the valve that allows air into the pipe (Figure 7). Every note on each stop has a pipe or several pipes with a valve that needs to be opened in order to sound.

Therefore, the key action becomes heavier with each additional stop added as the organist is controlling more and more mechanical components. The weight needed to depress each key is also compounded when manuals are coupled together, creating a stiff or “heavy” key action. When playing *tutti* with all the manuals coupled together, the weight could become almost prohibitively heavy on a large instrument with multiple manuals. This could also limit the music performed on the instrument as a heavy action often forces a performer to slow down in order to “make the pipes speak” properly via the completely mechanical action.

One can imagine a young Aristide eager to make his mark on the Parisian organ builder scene, promising groundbreaking innovations to solve a problem long thought unsolvable. Indeed, on December 14, 1833, the *Revue Musicale*, a prominent, weekly Paris publication dedicated to music, stated its concern with the decision made to award such a notable contract to this young, provincial arrival:

There has never, perhaps, been a better opportunity for erecting the handsomest and most fully developed of instruments: but in order that this goal might be attained, the task should have been entrusted to one or more builders whose work is available for inspection. . . . The gentlemen of the committee have singled out a builder from the provinces whose work they are unacquainted with, and who apparently was armed with endorsements and perhaps even influential patronage. In any event, it is said that without having inspected even one of his instruments, the committee awarded him 80,000 fr. worth of work at Saint-Denis.⁹²

⁹² *Revue Musicale* VII, 46 (December 14, 1833): 369-70, quoted in Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 11.

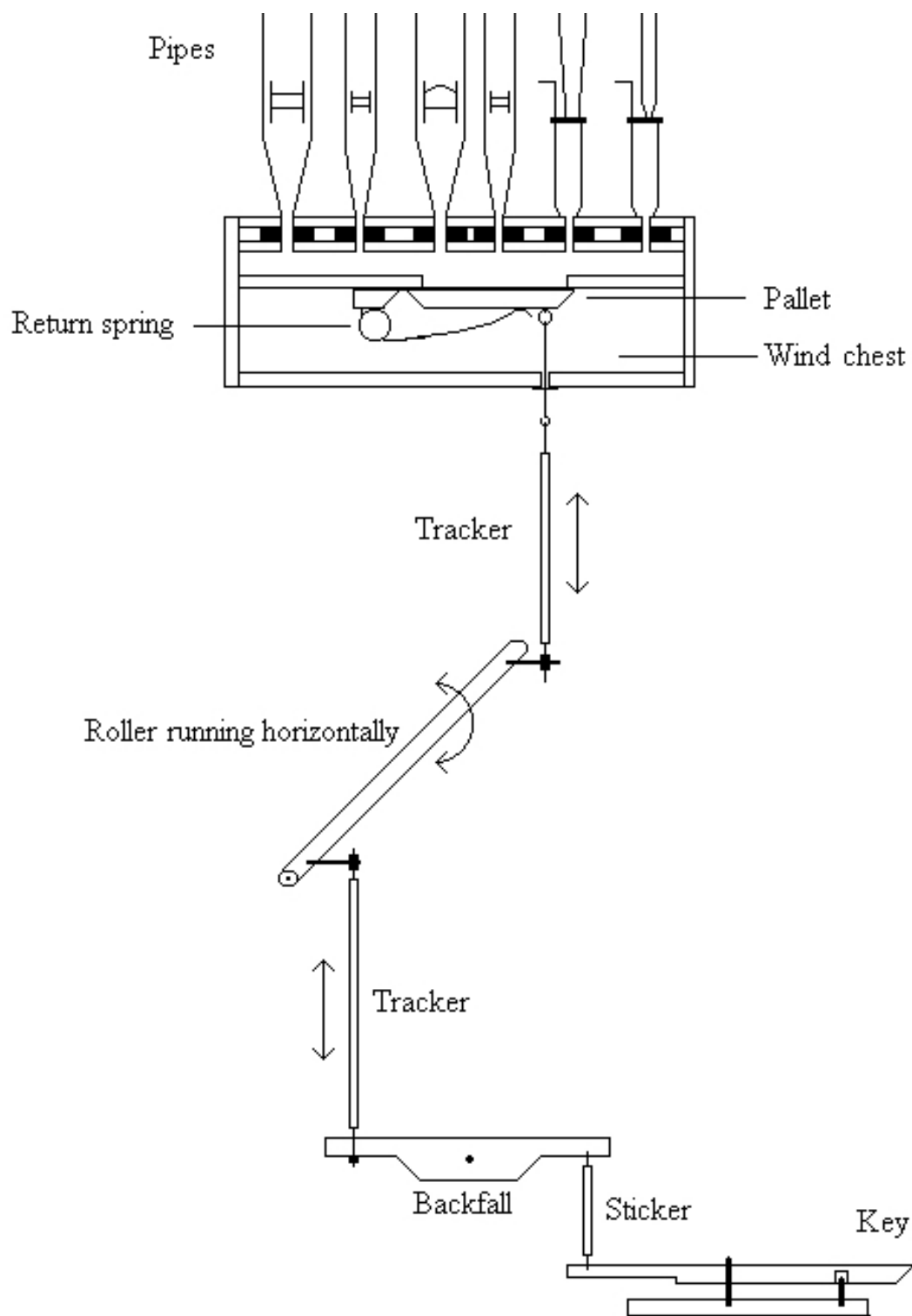


Figure 7: Tracker action components⁹³

⁹³ Image courtesy of http://www.pykett.org.uk/the_physics_of_organ_actions.htm.

The established Parisian organ builders must have been furious. Douglass states that “the award, announced on October 2 [only twelve days after Cavaillé-Coll’s arrival in Paris], must have been a terrible shock to the losing competitors: Pierre Érard, John Abbey, Louis Callinet, and Dallery, who is said to have turned Aristide away from his door only a few days earlier.”⁹⁴ The *Revue Musicale* objected, rightfully stating that “fashion holds such sway in Paris that it would be no surprise if this builder—whose worth, I repeat, is entirely unknown—were soon charged with more tasks than he could complete in his entire lifetime.”⁹⁵ Although no one in Paris would have had the chance to examine any of Cavaillé-Coll’s workmanship in the two days after the contract was awarded, another contract was immediately offered and many more came soon after, simply because of the decision made at Saint-Denis.

Cavaillé-Coll and the Barker machine

The organ at Saint-Denis is important, not only because it was the instrument that sparked Aristide Cavaillé-Coll’s long and productive career, but also because of many innovative components that had long-lasting repercussions for the French organ tradition. During the course of the seven years it took to produce the instrument, Cavaillé-Coll made the acquaintance of an English engineer newly come to Paris, Charles Spackman Barker (1806-1879).⁹⁶ Little seems to be known about Barker in his early years, but his innovative “Barker lever” was arguably the most revolutionary advance in organ building in the 1800s. Barker had presented his invention to English organ builders but was turned down. He then took this device to France where he met Cavaillé-Coll in 1837. Two years later he applied for and received a French patent for his

⁹⁴ Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 10.

⁹⁵ *Revue Musicale* 7, no. 46 (December 14, 1833): 369-70, quoted in Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 11.

⁹⁶ Originally, the organ was to have been finished in three years.

machine. Thanks to this serendipitously timed event, Cavaillé-Coll found the solution to one of his most pressing needs: how to couple multiple manuals together without creating an impractical amount of weight in the keys. He described the Barker system in a letter to a prospective customer: “This invention consists of a device especially designed to overcome, even by light finger pressure on the keys, the resistance encountered at the keyboards of large organs, especially with the various couplings; it is of great help in organs of four or five manuals.”⁹⁷

The Barker machine (Figure 8) was the first truly viable solution for relieving weight in coupled manuals. The mechanism works by placing a pneumatic motor under each key and allowing the expansion of the pneumatic pouch “C,” filled by air from channel “A,” to trigger the series of trackers. A weight “P” attached to the pouch would quickly return the key to its normal position, allowing the organist to rapidly repeat notes. In previous instruments, any coupling of the manuals would create a heavier action because the organist would now be physically triggering multiple notes (one on each manual) for every key he depressed, combined with the weight of each stop pulled on each of the coupled manuals. As Douglass notes, “it was an accepted fact that the size and dynamic power of an organ must be limited by the ability of human fingers to open the pallets connected to the manual keys. ... in 1834 it would be virtually impossible for most organists to play the organ at St.-Denis with five manuals coupled together.”⁹⁸ But now, thanks to the pneumatic assists provided by the Barker lever, the weight of the keys was drastically reduced when coupling the other manuals to the *Grand-orgue* division.

⁹⁷ Aristide Cavaillé-Coll to L’Abbé Sort, Directeur des dames hospitalières at Guingamp (Côtes-du-Nord), June 1, 1846, in Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 219.

⁹⁸ Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 29.

Cross-section of a Barker machine

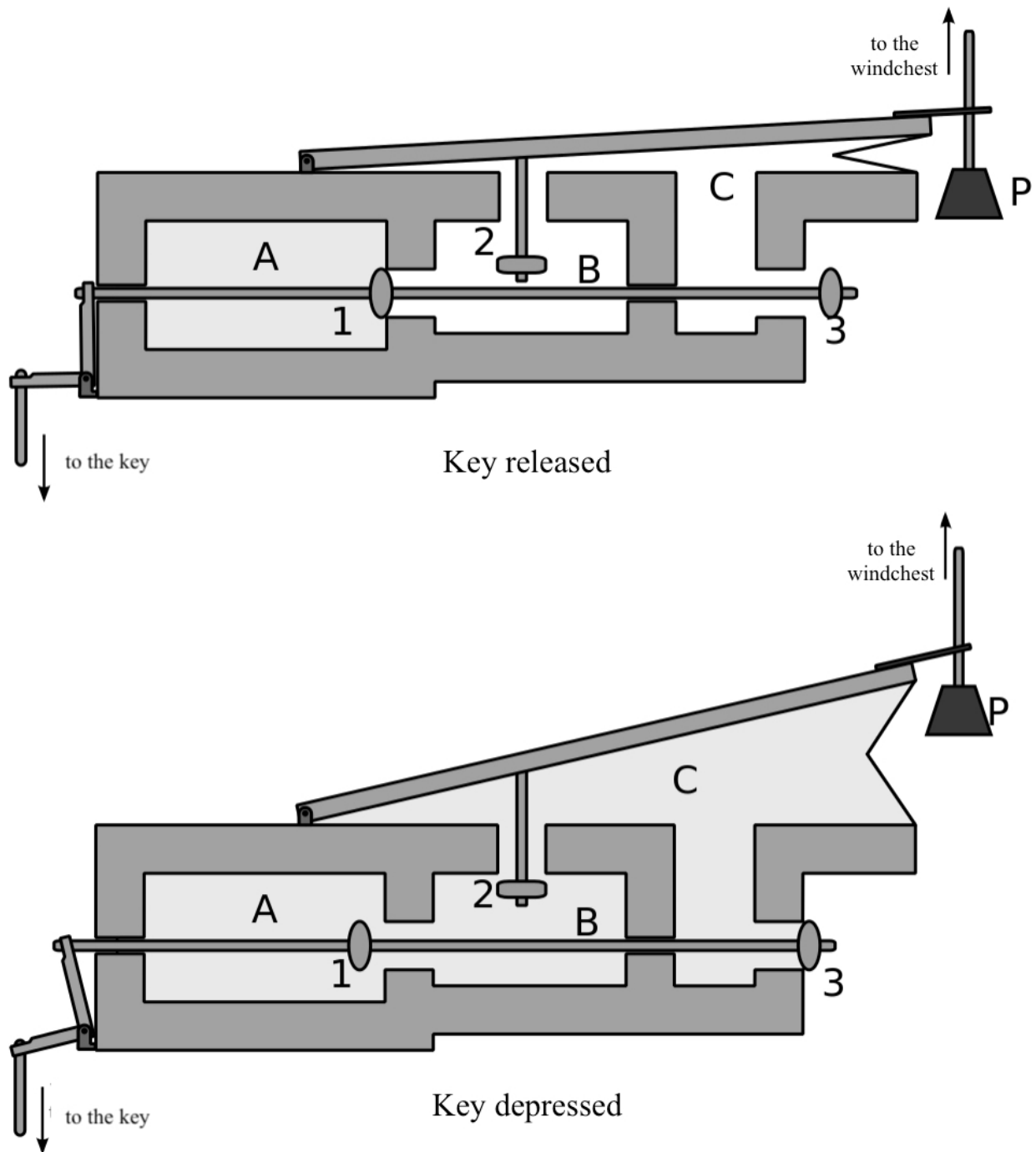


Figure 8: Diagram of the Barker lever mechanism⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Image courtesy of <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f4/CoupeMachineBarker.svg>. Translation mine.

Cavaillé-Coll not only implemented this pneumatic assist on the organ at Saint-Denis but he quickly began adding it to his other instruments. As Eschbach and Archbold note, without Barker's arrival in Paris at precisely the right time, providing Cavaillé-Coll with a viable technical solution, "the furor would have been enormous, and the established builders of Paris would certainly have wasted no time in denouncing the youngster from Toulouse as brash and incompetent, if not dishonest. Aristide and his family would certainly have beaten a hasty retreat back to their native Dordogne and at most occupied a paragraph or two in the history of the French organ."¹⁰⁰ French organ builders and organists immediately realized that here was "a scientific marvel that would release the organ at last from primitive restraints."¹⁰¹ And on completion of the Saint-Denis organ, Napoleon III recommended that the young organ builder rebuild France's cathedral organs.¹⁰² From 1841 until 1898, when Cavaillé-Coll completed his last instruments, the Barker lever was standard in his larger organs of twenty-five stops or more.¹⁰³ The use of the machine was met with some resistance but Aristide argued that his inclusion of Barker's device was well warranted:

The organist's technique must be guided not by the resistance of the keys but by the understanding and the artistry that govern his inspiration. Organ playing requires too serious a study and too broad a knowledge for us to allow physical demands to be placed upon the organist, in addition to those made upon his intellect. Quite the contrary: we think that if it were possible to design the organ in such a way that it might respond to the organist's inspiration alone, the effect would be more sublime, and organ music would attain its perfection. Since it makes the keyboard action lighter, Mr. Barker's invention can only be welcomed by organists and all those who are interested in improving the instrument.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Eschbach and Archbold, "Aristide Cavaillé-Coll," 233.

¹⁰¹ Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 30.

¹⁰² Peter Williams, *The European Organ: 1450-1850* (London: B T Batsford Ltd, 1966), 201.

¹⁰³ Eschbach and Archbold, "Aristide Cavaillé-Coll," 240.

¹⁰⁴ *Revue de la Musique*, 1-II-47 (Paris, 1847): 81-84, quoted in Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 59-60.

The Barker lever provided not only an immediate answer for Aristide's grandiose promise for the organ at Saint-Denis, but it also enabled Cavaillé-Coll to expand the instrument in significant ways. Now, the organ was not limited to the number of stops that a player could comfortably depress at one time. The Barker machine opened a whole new dimension for French organs, one that allowed a very different playing technique to be established. The ramifications of this innovation were hinted at by Charles-Marie Philbert, a French diplomat and organ builder who had worked in Cavaillé-Coll's workshop: "the most accomplished performer could not guarantee such rapidity [as from the Barker] when pitted against straight mechanical action ... all the finger need ever do is overcome the slight, always uniform resistance of a single tine valve ... in this way the key action of the most enormous organs is made as light, even, and responsive as that of the finest concert grand piano. ... Henceforth, the performer need only *play*, instead of having to accomplish a feat of strength."¹⁰⁵ The heavy actions of instruments from previous eras made it difficult to play fast passages, especially with repeated notes, on a true *tutti* registration. Virtuoso toccatas, a characteristic genre of the French Romantic period and beyond, used the Barker lever to advantage. Now organists would be able to play these pieces—such as the first and last movements of the *Romane*—with much greater ease.

Not only could additional ranks of pipes be added to the *tutti* without any extra effort exerted by the player, but the tonal design of the organ could be expanded. Cavaillé-Coll was well-known for his creation and use of symphonic stops and this allowed him to build larger instruments, incorporating stops that more closely resembled the orchestral instruments after which they were named. Douglass discusses many of the improved modifications Cavaillé-Coll included on his instruments. A new system of bellows that Aristide designed allowed one

¹⁰⁵ Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 31.

instrument to have the capacity for various stops to be on different wind pressures. This permitted the ranks to be differentiated from each other in tone and also gave the organ builder the ability to voice the ranks better, not relying on an inadequate wind supply to support the vastly different bass and treble stops. Cavaillé-Coll also voiced the instruments so that a real orchestral *tutti* could be used, as opposed to the very specific registrations that didn't allow various groups of stops to be played together in a French Classical *Plein-jeu*.¹⁰⁶ The stable and sufficient wind supply also supported Cavaillé-Coll's signature harmonic stops, the ranks of pipes that were twice as long as necessary—making the first harmonic speak instead of the fundamental—to create a more brilliant sound. Yet another innovation was the *ventil* pedal. This pedal gave the organist the ability to quickly turn the reed stops on and off as a group, using separate pedals to control the reeds on each manual. This gave the performer more flexibility in registration: instead of needing time to manually draw multiple stops, the performer could now do it immediately. Along with the *ventil* pedals were other foot pedals to control the couplers between manuals. The Barker mechanism allowed the organ builder to include couplers between any of the manuals, giving the performer much more control over crescendos and diminuendos created by the addition or subtraction of stops. Thanks to Cavaillé-Coll, the French symphonic organ also featured a balanced swell shoe that allowed the organist to play at every dynamic possible and to create a smooth crescendo or diminuendo with the opening of the swell shades. Previously, the swell shades were controlled by a metal pedal that would hook down to three different positions: *p*, *mf*, and *f*. Although this created some dynamic contrast, it was impossible to achieve a gradual, orchestral crescendo until Cavaillé-Coll's advances in organ building. All

¹⁰⁶ The French Classical organ period generally refers to the years 1660-1740. The use of the word *baroque* does not apply here as the music and instruments in France during this period were quite similar to each other, more so than those in the neighboring Holy Roman Empire. This is due mainly to the influence of Louis XIV, his court, and the French nation's desire to copy the fashions of Paris.

of these innovations and many more allowed Widor and his contemporaries to create a French symphonic organ repertoire that featured seamless dynamic shaping, similar to what an orchestra could achieve.

The Widors and Cavaillé-Coll

As one of the most important and highly revered French organ builders—if not *the* most important French organ builder—Aristide Cavaillé-Coll was not only a close friend and mentor in Widor’s life, but also a professional colleague. Cavaillé-Coll and Widor’s father, François-Charles Widor (1811-1899), were close friends and exact contemporaries, and Aristide frequently visited the Widor family home in Lyon throughout Charles-Marie’s childhood.¹⁰⁷ The friendship between Cavaillé-Coll and François-Charles provided the foundation for the younger Widor’s own long and fruitful relationship with the organ builder, which began at an early age.¹⁰⁸ Charles-Marie described the visits of the organ builder, noting that “it was a festivity when Mr. Cavaillé-Coll, in coming to Lyon, was the guest of my parents.”¹⁰⁹ One particular visit, when Charles was 14, was a pivotal point in his life: Cavaillé-Coll proposed that Widor go to

¹⁰⁷ Near, *Widor*, 8.

¹⁰⁸ In two of his books, *Saint-Saëns and the Organ* (p. 30) and *Toward an Authentic Interpretation of the Organ Works of César Franck* (p. 35), Rollin Smith writes that Cavaillé-Coll gave the name of the thirteen-year-old Charles-Marie as a recommendation for an organist to play the dedication recital at the new instrument at the church of Sainte-Madeleine, Tarare. Although this would provide an extremely convenient example of Cavaillé-Coll’s support of the young Charles-Marie, it seems highly unlikely for several reasons. The first name of “Mr. Widor” is nowhere provided in the letter, as translated (Fenner Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll and the Musicians*, letter from March 16, 1857, 363). “Mr. Widor” is listed as the organist at Saint-François and Cavaillé-Coll notes that he “possesses extensive knowledge of the theory and practice of organ building: his judgment would be that of a well-informed expert.” François-Charles, Charles-Marie’s father, was indeed *titulaire* of the instrument in Saint-François of Lyon from 1838-1884 and it is implausible to think that a thirteen-year-old, however talented an organist, would be described as a well-informed expert in organ building. In addition, the other organists recommended were all high-profile organists at famous churches in Paris and François-Charles would have been their equal in Lyon, described by Cavaillé-Coll as one of the “worthy artists who can be found in Lyon.” (Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll and the Musicians*, 363.) Even more importantly, the current *titulaire* organist at Sainte-Madeleine, Tarare, remarked in 2014 that the organ was inaugurated by “Charles-François Widor (father of Charles-Marie Widor)” (https://www.le-pays.fr/tarare/2014/08/14/classe-monument-historique-lorgue-est-inutilise_11110282.html).

¹⁰⁹ Near, *Widor*, 8.

Belgium and study with the prominent organ professor at the Royal Brussels Conservatoire, Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens (1823-1881). On Aristide's recommendation and with the full approval of his parents, the young Charles, after having finished his studies in Lyon, went to Brussels. Much has been written about Widor's experience studying with both Lemmens and François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871), the Conservatoire's director and composition professor. This period of study was a crucial turning point, exposing Widor to the music and interpretation of Bach.¹¹⁰ Widor soon became known for playing and teaching Bach's music in France at a time when it was not widely known or appreciated. Widor himself said that "this year of study determined my career."¹¹¹ And as John Near states, "not only are the greatest organs of the period due to the industrious genius of Cavaillé-Coll, but, by taking the initiative to send ... Widor to Lemmens, he indirectly deserves credit for establishing the preeminent school of organists who played."¹¹² Widor also commented that Cavaillé-Coll, along with Lemmens, "succeeded in setting in motion the great long-inert pendulum and determining the movement that is going to accelerate without cease in our country."¹¹³

After his studies in Belgium, Widor returned to Paris and began building his career in earnest, again with the help of Cavaillé-Coll. The organ builder introduced Widor to the Parisian public with a recital at the church of Saint-Sulpice, where Cavaillé-Coll's largest organ had recently been inaugurated and where Widor would eventually land as organist.¹¹⁴ In many of his letters, Widor addresses Cavaillé-Coll with intimate, close terms such as "father Cavaillé" or

¹¹⁰ Widor himself said that he had studied there for a year, from 1862-1863, but John Near specifies that based on correspondences from Widor's time, Charles-Marie was only there for a period of about four and a half months (Near, *Widor*, 11).

¹¹¹ Near, *Widor*, 9.

¹¹² Near, "Charles-Marie Widor," 47.

¹¹³ Near, *Widor*, 16.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

“my faithful protector,” demonstrating both the closeness of their relationship and the respect Widor showed towards his mentor.¹¹⁵ Even Charles-Marie’s brother, Paul Widor (1847-1930)—also an organist and their father’s successor as *titulaire* at the Saint-François church in Lyon from 1884 to 1889—was close friends with Cavaillé-Coll, often describing how much Cavaillé-Coll did to support his brother’s career.¹¹⁶ In letters from 1869, Paul revealed that Aristide Cavaillé-Coll was instrumental in securing the posting of Widor at Saint-Sulpice as “provisional organist.” In this prominent and distinguished position, which he held from 1870 to 1933, Widor had access to all the innovations Cavaillé-Coll included on this, his magnum opus of five manuals and one hundred stops. Widor played on this instrument nearly his entire adult life so it would stand to reason that Widor would, at the very least, have the Cavaillé-Coll sound in his ear when composing his works for organ.

The organ builder’s friendship was a deciding factor in much of Widor’s life, even after the twenty-five-year-old secured the post at Saint-Sulpice: Charles-Marie was frequently asked by Cavaillé-Coll to perform dedication concerts on many of the new instruments that the organ builder constructed for churches in France and throughout Europe and he was the unofficial performer for private recital showings of the new instruments. While various organs were set up for final testing in the Cavaillé-Coll workshop in Paris, Widor gave regular concerts to show off the instruments to the Parisian elite before the organs were delivered.¹¹⁷ The relationship between Cavaillé-Coll and Widor was mutually beneficial: Cavaillé-Coll had a virtuoso whom he could practically call his own and who would show off his instruments in the best possible light. Widor had a mentor who was not only influential at the beginning of his career, but was a

¹¹⁵ Near, “Charles-Marie Widor,” 48-49.

¹¹⁶ Near, *Widor*, 7; 43-46.

¹¹⁷ Near, “Charles-Marie Widor,” 50.

guiding influence throughout his life, continually providing opportunities for Widor to play his own music—music that took advantage of the innovations Cavaillé-Coll had pioneered.

Other innovations

Widor, when talking about musicians of the late 1700s, said that “the organ did not allow them to express their thought” and he believed that because of this, organ music in the generations immediately preceding him was decadent and lacked actual substance.¹¹⁸ This belief that the instruments themselves were integral to the organ music composed was shared by many others. Thus, the Cavaillé-Coll developments were frequently praised as the organs now allowed organ music to have a more refined sense of dynamics, greater tonal color, and ease in playing. In 1911, Camille Saint-Saëns wrote a brief essay on the organ, describing some of the many developments made by the French organ builder in the 1800s.

Playing the old instruments was tiring and uncomfortable. The touch was heavy and when the manuals were coupled a real display of strength was necessary. ... It was almost impossible to change registration. All nuances, except for an abrupt change from loud to soft and vice-versa were impossible. It remained for Cavaillé-Coll to change all this and open up new vistas for the organ. In France he introduced pedalboards worthy of the name and, by his invention of harmonic stops, gave to the upper octaves a brilliance they lacked. He invented wonderful combination pedals which allow the organist to change his combinations and, to vary the tone without the aid of an assistant or without leaving the keyboard.¹¹⁹

Saint-Saëns went on to laud the symphonic nature of the modern organ and give admonitions on its use. The “wonderful combination pedals” that Saint-Saëns was referring to are the *ventil* pedals. There are many points in the outer movements of the *Romane* where Widor notates the addition or subtraction of the *anches* to and from the *fonds*.¹²⁰ Although possible

¹¹⁸ Near, *Widor*, 15.

¹¹⁹ Camille Saint-Saëns, “L’Orgue,” *École Buissonnière* (Paris: Lafitte, 1913), 169-76, quoted in Rollin Smith, *Saint-Saëns and the Organ* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992), 206.

¹²⁰ *Anches* are reed stops and *fonds* are foundation stops.

(with the aid of human assistants) prior to Cavaillé-Coll's design, it would have been difficult to achieve these sudden stop changes at the speed with which Widor desired them. Widor also specifies exactly where and how the manuals should be coupled. On the Cavaillé-Coll organ, couplers were now controlled via a set of pedal levers, once again giving more dynamic control to the player, allowing the divisions to be coupled and uncoupled quickly to create greater dynamic and color contrasts. Throughout the work, Widor gives many dynamic indications that can be achieved with the use of the *ventils*, the expression pedal, the couplers, or a combination of all three (Figure 9).

Cavaillé-Coll did not invent the *boîte expressive* but took the system of swell boxes used by contemporary organ builders and improved upon it to create organs capable of expressing a full dynamic range. The swell box is an enclosure in which some of the pipework resides, with a series of shutters similar to Venetian blinds controlling the amount of sound let into the room. In earlier English and French organs, the swell box was controlled by a ratchet lever. This pedal lever regulated the swell shades and usually had two or three notches into which the ratchet would lock, thus limiting the shutters to three positions. This did not allow organists to easily create a smooth crescendo or decrescendo and the lever was designed to immediately return to the top position (with the swell shades closed) once it was released. Cavaillé-Coll improved upon the design and created the "balanced swell shoe," a pedal that did not need to be held in position by a ratchet. This gave organists the ability to fully control the swell shades and create seamless dynamic shaping, giving Widor and his contemporaries the opportunity to create a symphonic organ repertoire.

Handwritten musical score for movement 4, measures 63-71. The score is in 2/4 time and features three systems of staves. The first system (measures 63-65) includes a "Tempo I" marking and a handwritten "1/8" note. The second system (measures 66-68) includes a circled "GPR" marking and a "crescendo" instruction. The third system (measures 69-71) includes two boxed annotations: "+ Anches Ped" and "+ Anches Pos". The score is heavily annotated with handwritten notes and markings, including fingerings, dynamics, and performance instructions.

Figure 9: movement 4, measures 63-71

Each of the written notations beginning with +Anches denotes the use of a *ventil* pedal to add reeds as a group from the specified division.¹²¹ The circled *GPR* indicates that the *Positif* and *Récit* manuals are coupled to the *Grand Orgue*. Widor's *crescendo* implies both the use of the expression pedal and the addition of stops.¹²²

¹²¹ These particular additions of the *anches* are not specifically noted in these exact measures by the composer but follow the French organ school traditions of registration, many of which Widor did describe. These registrations were suggested by Michel Bouvard to me during my study of the *Symphonie Romane* on the Cavaillé-Coll organ at Saint-Sernin.

¹²² Widor described how to achieve a proper crescendo and decrescendo in his preface to the work *Jean-Sébastien Bach—Euvres complètes pour orgue*, Vols. 1-4 (New York: Schirmer, 1914). An English translation of the section entitled "Registration" is available in John R. Near, *Widor on Organ Performance Practice and Technique* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2019), 53-56.

In 1857, Pierre-Henri Lamazou, vicar at Saint-Sulpice, asked Cavaillé-Coll to restore both the choir organ and the 1781 Clicquot grand organ at the church.¹²³ In 1863, a year after Cavaillé-Coll finished the restoration, M. l'Abbé Lamazou wrote a lengthy treatise on the Saint-Sernin organ and the state of modern organ building, highly praising Cavaillé-Coll's work. In his writings, Lamazou describes the restoration in great detail, outlining the differences between the old instrument and the new one, including stoplists and tables for further clarification. He also examines several other Cavaillé-Coll instruments from across Europe, all the while explaining the art of modern organ-building. In one chapter, Lamazou discusses the visceral connection between an organist and an instrument. He maintains that the organist is inseparable from the organ because he or she is its soul.¹²⁴ Further, the "immense progress realized by modern organ building" had as its goal to "facilitate the mission of the organist, in furnishing the means to move without hindrance a great instrumental mass, to produce effects of a variety and a power unknown until now."¹²⁵ To Lamazou, the perfecting of the mechanical, scientific, and artistic components enabled and inspired the artist to make serious contributions to organ music.¹²⁶ As Widor stated, "Thanks to the genius of Cavaillé-Coll ... an organ school without rival in the world today was formed on the banks of the Seine."¹²⁷ Without Cavaillé-Coll's updated technology and experimental innovations for his instruments, the French Romantic organ school and its music would look and sound very different.

¹²³ Daniel Roth and Pierre-François Dub-Attenti, *The Neoclassical Organ and the Great Aristide Cavaillé-Coll Organ of Saint-Sulpice, Paris*, trans. George Baker and Michael Eddyshaw (London: Rhinegold, 2014), 25. The organ had previously been restored in 1835-45 by Daubline-Callinet.

¹²⁴ Lamazou, M. l'abbé [Pierre-Henri]. *Étude sur l'orgue monumental de Saint-Sulpice et la facture d'orgue moderne* (Paris: E. Repos, 1863).

¹²⁵ Ibid., 95. Translation mine.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Charles-Marie Widor, *Ménestrel* 65 (1899): 131-32, in Near, *Widor*, 268.

The Saint-Sernin organ committee's report

Much space in this thesis will be devoted to the necessary examination of the resources and characteristics of Saint-Sernin's 1889 Cavaillé-Coll organ in relation to Widor's final organ symphony. Regardless of the performance tradition and its rather nebulous creation, the innate historical importance of this particular instrument needs to be acknowledged. Upon the completion of Cavaillé-Coll's extensive restoration and rebuilding, a formal *Rapport* (Appendix 2) was written by a thirteen-member committee tasked with verifying that the organ builder had sufficiently carried out the desired work.¹²⁸ This 1889 report is most likely the earliest description of the organ and was provided to members of the *conseil de fabrique*, the administering members of the parish. The commission was comprised of prominent musicians, including Alexandre Guilmant, businessmen of Toulouse, and several people who worked for the Saint-Sernin Basilica—a slim majority of the thirteen members were non-musicians. The organ itself is now regarded as a highly important historical example of organ-building and it is clear that the committee recognized it as such from the very beginning.

The formal report is divided into five sections: 1) a summary of the work done on the organ and whether or not it conformed to what was originally planned, 2) an examination of the mechanical parts and materials used in the instrument, 3) a consideration of the sound itself (*la sonorité*), 4) a summary and conclusion, and 5) a short discussion on the restoration of the choir organ. In the first section, the report is ordered according to the divisions of the organ and

¹²⁸ *Rapport de la commission*, 1889.

focuses on the stops that Cavaillé-Coll moved around, changed, or added to the stops he used from the 1845 Daublaine and Callinet instrument.¹²⁹

The mechanical condition of the instrument is examined next and the commission remarks at the high quality of both the materials used and the work Cavaillé-Coll put into the mechanical devices. They give a glowing report of the work done, calling it “impeccably executed” (*irréprochablement exécutée*).¹³⁰ The report states that in the detailed investigation, the examiners could not discover even the smallest fault in the work. The bellows were given special attention and the committee notes that the winding of the instrument is amply supplied with four people pumping, thanks to sixteen reservoirs Cavaillé-Coll included in the instrument. They were not able to find even a tiny escape of air throughout the system and playing a *tutti* chord with all the couplers pulled took thirty seconds to deplete all the air in the instrument after the people working the bellows stopped pumping.¹³¹ Even though the winding system was later electrified and human power was no longer necessary to create the air supply, it seems that the instrument was so adequately supplied with air prior to the electrification of the system that there would probably not have been a noticeable difference in sound pre- and post-electrification.

The section of the *Rapport* that discusses the sound of the instrument is particularly intriguing because the commission remarks that in spite of the bad acoustics, Cavaillé-Coll managed to make the organ speak well in the room. The acoustics of the church, however, have

¹²⁹ Although Maurice Puget modified the instrument slightly in the 1930s and then again in the 1950s, a concerted effort was made in the 1990s to bring the organ more closely in line with Cavaillé-Coll’s instrument of 1889; see Claude Noisette de Crauzat, “La restauration de l’orgue Cavaillé-Coll de Saint-Sernin de Toulouse,” *L’Orgue* 241 (1997): 11-13. This restoration, made by Bertrand Cattiaux and Jean-Loup Boisseau, was aimed at restoring the organ to its original condition but was not entirely satisfactory in bringing the voicing back to what it would have been one hundred years previous. In 2016, another restoration effort began that was necessary for maintenance and also sought to rectify the voicing issues.

¹³⁰ *Rapport*, 17.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

changed since this time because of the removal of plaster from the interior walls. The plaster had been added by Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc in the restoration of the church in the 1870s but once the plaster was removed in the 1970s, the reverberation was drastically shortened thanks to the sound-absorbing properties of the now-uncovered stone. The organ continues to speak well into the room and there is a satisfying reverberation, but the length of that reverberation is nowhere near as long as it would have been at the time of Widor's composition. The *conseil* remarks on the great beauty and homogeneity in the sound which creates a majestic effect while yet remaining delicate, a sentiment that is shared by Michel Bouvard, who states that the power of the organ does not consist solely in the level of decibels but is also created through the exquisite color and timbre of the *tutti*.¹³² This "powerful sonority" created by Cavaillé-Coll has remained mainly untouched and attests to the creativity and skill of the organ builder in reusing pipework from the previous instrument.¹³³

The commission's glowing report concludes by saying that Cavaillé-Coll's work, which went above and beyond his contract, leaves absolutely nothing to be desired. The committee immediately recognized that the work done on the instrument at Saint-Sernin placed the organ among the most beautiful and most admired of Cavaillé-Coll instruments in France and indeed among the most important cities in Europe. Although little mention is made of the inauguration, Alexandre Guilmant signed the document along with the other members of the commission and the original poster for the inauguration is included at the end, along with the specifications of the organ. The *Rapport* provides a rare and invaluable perspective on the organ at Saint-Sernin and demonstrates the degree to which musicians and non-musicians alike immediately understood

¹³² "Toulouse, le relevage de l'orgue de Saint-Sernin," Youtube video, "Mairie de Toulouse" (September 6, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kwg6AdniuhU>, 1:38-2:07.

¹³³ *Rapport*, 18.

that this organ was a remarkable example of Cavaillé-Coll's finest organ-building techniques. Even now, the organ remains a wonderful resource for musicians who wish to experience the power, beauty, and grandeur of the French Romantic organ and its music.

The *Symphonie Romane* and Cavaillé-Coll instruments

Unlike most other musicians, organists do not have the ability to take their own personal instrument with them to each performance. One vital skill of a good organist is the ability to quickly get to know and understand each particular organ and its idiosyncrasies: the number and type of stops available, the timbres of those stops and how to build good combinations from them, how the sound carries and blends in the room, and many other, more subtle details.

Builders are known for including their own particular features on their instruments and Cavaillé-Coll was no different. Widor, as organist at Saint-Sulpice and as one of Cavaillé-Coll's personal favorites for both recitals and organ dedications, had a deep understanding and knowledge of the instruments by this particular builder—a mastery evident in his compositions.

In addition to the innovations discussed earlier, Cavaillé-Coll's instruments included a reconfiguration of the manual divisions to make the *Positif* a subservient division to the *Grand Orgue* to facilitate more seamless crescendos and decrescendos along with a smoother dynamic range and an expanded pedal division that is fully independent from the manual divisions.

Corliss Arnold elaborates on the altered pedal division:

One of the most significant changes made in the design of organs by Cavaillé-Coll was in the pedal division. In the Classical French organ, there were rarely more than three pedal stops, an eight-foot reed, an eight-foot flute, and perhaps a four-foot flute. The pedal part often sounded the plainsong melody in long notes on the trumpet or played a soft part in trios. The only way a 16-foot sound could appear in the pedal was through the Great to pedal coupler (*tirasse*). The left hand performed the real bass function on the manuals most of the time. The nineteenth-century change, however, increased the size of the pedal

division considerably and moved the voice which performed the bass function into the pedal.¹³⁴

An in-depth look at the role of the pedal in the *Symphonie Romane* would be pedantic and gratuitous. But it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that some of the most radical changes Cavaillé-Coll made to French instruments can often be taken for granted by modern organists, now used to playing these 150-year-old instruments. Widor had not simply grown accustomed to these innovations; the Saint-Sulpice organ was the direct inspiration for his first organ symphonies and therefore also influential in his later organ symphonies. In looking specifically at the *Symphonie Romane*, there are many distinct examples of Widor's reliance on Cavaillé-Coll's innovations.

The Barker machine gave organists the ability to play passages with large, full chords, immediately repeated notes, and fast, toccata-like figurations with much greater ease. In the *Romane*, there are multiple examples of where Widor took advantage of the new technology, writing passages that could now be played without damaging one's hands or arms. The opening movement immediately provides several examples (Figure 4). The first measure opens with sixteenth notes in 12/8 time: both a fast grace-note figure and an immediate repetition of two F# sixteenths are present. Another grace-note figure is present in the fourth measure, along with an arabesque pattern of decorative sixteenths, which continue through the second page. In m. 38, the arabesque figures come back and are soon transformed into diadic sixteenth notes in both hands (Figure 10). Although Widor does not provide a written *tutti* indication at this point, French Romantic performance practice calls for the addition of stops at the marked *crescendo* and the *fff* dynamic.¹³⁵ On a full *tutti*, especially with all three manuals coupled as specified, this passage

¹³⁴ Arnold, *Organ Literature*, 199.

¹³⁵ See Goodrich, *The Organ in France*, 58-61.

would have been extremely difficult to play on instruments without a Barker lever. These sixteenth note figures on the *Grand-orgue*, with some variations, continue through m. 62, then move to the *Postif*. Without the Barker machine in place, the passages on the *Grand-orgue* would have been a demanding and fatiguing workout for the performer.

(♩. = 60)
 (R Fonds et Anches 16', 8', 4')

38 PR GPR

40 PR R 8va

42

Figure 10: movement 1, measures 38-43

The middle two movements do not present weight issues: the only similar passage in the *Choral* movement, the thirty-second note left-hand arpeggios in mm. 41-52, is placed on the *Récit*. The last movement, however, once again exploits the mechanical innovation used by Cavaillé-Coll throughout the entirety of its ten-and-a-half minutes. The arabesque figures from the first movement are brought back at the beginning of the *Final*, now as a much faster toccata figuration. The alternating diadic figures also make an appearance starting in m. 25, and the middle *Andante* section is full of sixteenth-note passages that bring the piece to its ultimate climax in m. 130. Here, Widor uses the full forces the organ has to offer, marking *fff* in both the pedal and on all three coupled manuals. He writes large, full chords of eighth- and sixteenth-note durations, often with nine and ten notes each (Figure 11). Even with the Barker lever, the weight is substantial and requires the organist to use their full arm and hand strength. Without the use of the Barker lever, this passage would have been almost impossible to play as notated, simply due to the weight that would have amassed.



Figure 11: movement 4, measures 128-133

In regards to registration in the *Romane*, Widor is often brief in his notations and almost vague, relying heavily on the performer's knowledge of French Romantic organ registrations. At the beginning of the first movement, he asks simply for "Fonds 8', 4', 2', Mixtures" in the *Grand-orgue*, *Positif*, and *Récit*, with the latter two coupled down to the *Grand-orgue*. The *Pédale* is marked only "Fonds 16', 8', 4'" with all three manuals coupled down. Although this seems to leave quite a bit of latitude in the registrations which one could choose, it is important to note that French organ registration indications are based on certain understood formulas, formulas that Widor took very seriously. Albert Schweitzer described the care with which Widor taught registrational changes and the great importance he placed on a correct registration:

The control of the foot couplers and the combination pedals requires, of course, a very special technique. ... How often under the inexorable eyes of Guilmant, Gigout, or Widor, the pupil practices a transition, until he finally gets it, exact to the hundredth part of a second, quietly, without contortion, with infallible assurance, pressing down a coupler or a combination pedal and at once in readiness for the next one! For almost every piece one has to practice the climaxes, where the sequence of movements attains a certain complexity. I stood beside Widor when he was studying his last symphony, the *Symphonie Romane*. How many times did he return to certain places, before the couplers and the combination pedals obeyed him as he wished!¹³⁶

These complex registrations can sometimes seem obtuse to those outside the French school of organ playing, but they are, in reality, based on a few principles, observed by Wallace Goodrich, an American organist and writer who studied organ with Widor in Paris in the late 1890s:

The tonal scheme of the best French organs aims above all else at perfection of ensemble. ... On the whole, in their interpretations of organ compositions, the French are accustomed to depend upon the nuances made possible by perfect touch control, rather than upon effects derived from frequent changes of intensity or color in registration. To them, the intrinsic musical value of the work is more important than the variety or novelty of the colors in which it is clothed. Through the perfection of touch ... the finest nuances of rhythm, accent and phrasing are obtained; while the treatment from the standpoint of registration is more objective. ... we find in French organs that dependence

¹³⁶ Joy, *Music in the Life*, 146.

is placed largely upon the foundation stops for sonority, upon the reeds for power, and upon the reeds and mixtures, or mutations, for brilliancy.¹³⁷

Goodrich goes on to clearly explain many of the conventional facets of organ-playing in the French performance traditions so that Americans, in particular, would be able to understand and perform French works on their own American instruments. By understanding which stops are included in a specific family of timbres, the performer would be able to create the desired registrations.

Orpha Ochse examined accounts of Widor's students and noted that "Phrasing, registration, changes of manuals, and use of the swell box were all planned along long lines, related to the architecture of the piece. Widor did not like frequent changes of registration or special effects of any kind," preferring instead to rely upon rhythm and touch to convey expression in organ music.¹³⁸ John Near explains further in his Introduction to the *Symphonie Romane*:

Widor generally indicated registrations by family of tone-color instead of exact stop nomenclature. In so doing he never intended to condone willful or indiscriminate interpretations of his registrational plans. ... One should no more alter the "orchestration" of a Widor organ symphony than change or dress up the instrumentation of a Beethoven symphony. Clearly, the faithful realization of Widor's registrational plan is essential to the presentation of these works as the composer heard them. Beyond this, knowledge of the Cavaillé-Coll organ, the instrument preferred by Widor, will also prove useful to the performer intent on maximum fidelity to the composer's intention.¹³⁹

Although Widor seems to indicate a certain amount of latitude for including stops in the *fonds*, *anches*, or *tutti* registrations, when Widor denotes specific stops, the indications are intended to be directly followed. Many of the specific indications refer to stops that had been greatly improved upon by Cavaillé-Coll such the *Grand-orgue* Flûte 8' at the beginning of the *Choral*, or

¹³⁷ Goodrich, *Organ in France*, 49-50.

¹³⁸ Ochse, *Organists*, 186.

¹³⁹ John Near, Introduction to *The Symphonies for Organ: Symphonie romane*, by Charles-Marie Widor (Middleton, Wis.: A-R Editions, 1997), xi.

the *Récit* Gambes 8' in m. 38 of the same movement, or the *Récit* Clarinette at the beginning of the *Cantilène*.

Rather than rehearsing the details on how Cavaillé-Coll modified various organ timbres, it is sufficient to recognize and acknowledge that his innovations, particularly in the area of organ registrations, created a momentous change in the French organ soundscape. Arnold states, “The manual divisions of Cavaillé-Coll organs are dominated by brilliant, high-pressure reeds. Other characteristics are harmonic flutes, orchestra reeds, and strings. Cavaillé-Coll generally suppressed the inclusion of mutations and mixtures, a practice which transformed the basic character of the organ from a polyphonic instrument to a homophonic, orchestral one.”¹⁴⁰ And as Ochse summarized, “His instruments, more than any others, determined how nineteenth-century French organ music *sounded*. After the long, difficult post-Revolution period, he gave the organ a new voice eminently suited for the music of his age, and it remained a consistent voice for the rest of the century.”¹⁴¹ The *Romane* is an archetypal example of the music that benefited from these changes: it would not have existed without Cavaillé-Coll’s ingenious alterations to the French organ.

Two other important considerations in the *Romane* are the orchestral dynamics and the use of the extended and expanded *Récit* and *Pédale* divisions. When compared to the first eight symphonies, the *Romane* is much more symphonic in many aspects, taking full advantage of the capabilities of the Cavaillé-Coll instruments. John Near described the compositional change Widor displays over the course of those twenty-five years when he notes that “the stylistic crescendo evident in Symphonies I through VIII continues through the *gothique* and *romane*, but

¹⁴⁰ Arnold, *Organ Literature*, 199.

¹⁴¹ Ochse, *Organists*, 225.

a different kind of climax results. Widor had formed a very personal concept of organ music through years of observation and experimentation, and he had written in forms that many considered secular. With the last two symphonies he expelled all that.”¹⁴² Some of this difference is a direct result of the material Widor uses and the amalgamation of the melismatic Gregorian chant with the other, more rhythmic compositional material. But Widor also uses long, singing phrases, recurring textural changes, and above all else, constantly shifting, orchestral dynamics. Although he notated many dynamics in his earlier symphonies, in the last two, he often includes almost measure-by-measure use of “hairpins,” particularly in the first movement of the *Romane* as well as the melody line in the *Cantilène*. Thanks to Cavaillé-Coll’s improved swell boxes, these dynamics are not only easy to achieve, but are also extremely effective, creating myriad shades of sound between the marked dynamics.

The *Romane* uses the entire range of both the manuals and the pedals, immediately evident in the opening pages of the work where the right-hand pedal point is on F^{#6} of the *Récit*, a note that did not exist on the *Récit* manuals of earlier organs (Figure 4). Later, in mm. 46-50 of the first movement, the right hand again has a sustained pedal point, this time on G⁶. Not only did Cavaillé-Coll expand the range of his instruments to include these notes, but due to his changes to the physical characteristics of the pipes, these highest notes would sing out above the rest, rather than be concealed by the lower pitches. In the *Choral*, Widor takes full advantage of the expanded *Pédale* range by prominently placing a melismatic countersubject in the highest octave of the pedal, mm. 5-6 (Figure 5) and mm. 11-12. Also in the *Choral*, the harmonic flute from the *Grand-orgue* sings out in its highest octaves for the entire middle section. Cavaillé-Coll’s harmonic flute, much stronger in tone due to his changes, provides a soaring contrast to

¹⁴² Near, “Introduction” to *Symphonie romane*, vii.

the other voices, something that an earlier version of the French flute stop would not have provided.

Conclusion

Cavaillé-Coll died around the same time that the *Romane* was completed and shortly before it was published in 1900. The organ builder may have known Widor's last symphony, though, and according to Ben van Oosten, "Most likely, it was the *Symphonie Romane*, when at the end of 1898 Cavaillé-Coll wrote in a letter to Widor: 'Mio Caro, it appears that your new symphony is a masterpiece.'"¹⁴³ Had it not been for Aristide Cavaillé-Coll and his innovative organ-building, much of Widor's organ music, in addition to the *Symphonie Romane*, would not have existed in its present form. Musical creativity is often constrained by the technologies available and this was the case with the older French instruments that were not physically capable of creating the desired orchestral crescendos as well as the many other novel techniques enumerated here.

It is impossible to definitively say that Widor had Cavaillé-Coll's instruments in mind when writing the *Symphonie Romane*, but it is extremely probable, especially when a few of Widor's registrational indications are considered.¹⁴⁴ In his Op. 73, Widor took advantage of these innovations and others made by Cavaillé-Coll. The question of whether the composer's demands in the music pushed for changes to the instruments or vice-versa creates a "chicken-or-egg" scenario and would be inefficacious to this thesis. The innovations described above were radical changes which opened the door to the creation of the French symphonic organ repertoire, a grand genre of music that equaled the updated instruments and effectively and obviously showed off

¹⁴³ van Oosten, *Charles-Marie Widor*, 576. Translation mine.

¹⁴⁴ As mentioned above, Cavaillé-Coll pioneered the use of harmonic stops and in particular, the Flûte Harmonique, which is used a great deal in the second movement of the *Romane*.

the changes. But while it is important to acknowledge that Widor's music is dependent on symphonic instruments, the question remains as to whether it "belongs" on one particular Cavaillé-Coll instrument, the 1889 organ at Saint-Sernin, as often assumed by modern organists.

Bernard Gavoty, French musicologist and organist, remarked in his well-known biography of Louis Vierne that Widor "created, in the true sense of the word, the organ symphony, of which the only example before him was the *Grande Pièce symphonique* by Franck."¹⁴⁵ He further stated that Widor was aiming to "produce, in the symphonic form, a music of which the mood, the writing and the architecture were perfectly adapted to all of the devices which the romantic organ, conceived by Cavaillé-Coll, put at the disposal of composers."¹⁴⁶ César Franck was titular organist at Sainte-Clotilde, where the organ had been completed by Cavaillé-Coll in 1859 and was specifically designed to have an orchestral crescendo. Franck's *Grande Pièce symphonique* was composed in 1860-62 as part of the *Six Pieces* (published 1868), pieces that have been described by Rollin Smith as "the first major contribution to French organ literature in over a century, and the most important organ music written since Mendelssohn's. Franck was the first to realize the potential of the symphonic organ."¹⁴⁷ Franck had the new organ at Sainte-Clotilde in mind when he composed these pieces and original manuscripts exist with his own registration markings for this organ.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, his prominent use of new stops designed by Cavaillé-Coll specifically for that instrument demonstrate that Franck very much had this instrument in mind when he was composing.¹⁴⁹ If Franck, who was just getting to know this Cavaillé-Coll instrument, specifically used aspects of the instrument in his compositions, it

¹⁴⁵ Bernard Gavoty, *Louis Vierne: la vie et l'œuvre* (Paris: A. Michel, 1943), 54. Translation mine.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 55. Translation mine.

¹⁴⁷ Smith, *César Franck*, 27.

¹⁴⁸ Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll*, 136.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 139-40.

is plausible to think that Widor, who thoroughly knew Cavaillé-Coll's magnum opus, might have done similarly in his compositions.¹⁵⁰ Widor himself affirmed a symbiotic relationship between the organ and his compositions: "It's when I felt the 6,000 pipes of the Saint-Sulpice organ vibrating under my hands and feet that I took to writing my first four organ symphonies. ... I wrote feeling them deeply, asking myself if they were inspired by Bach or Mendelssohn. No, I was listening to the sonorousness of Saint-Sulpice, and naturally I sought to extract from it a musical fabric."¹⁵¹ Widor paid homage to the man who made this music possible by including a dedication to "M. A. Cavaillé-Coll" in the 1879 edition of his first four organ symphonies. Later, he even went so far as to say, "if I had not felt the seduction of these timbres, the mystic spell of this wave of sound, I would not have written any organ music."¹⁵² But Widor's most telling comment is when he described Cavaillé-Coll as such a seminal figure in history that "without him, the French organ repertoire would not exist."¹⁵³

Widor explained this inseparable relationship between the new French organ repertoire and the French symphonic instruments in his own words in the foreword to his first four organ symphonies, which warrants being quoted at length:

Although it is unusual to include a foreword at the beginning of a musical edition, I think it is necessary to do so here in order to explain the character, the style, the registration procedures and the characteristic symbols of these eight symphonies.

The early instruments had ... two colors, black and white, flue stops and mixture stops, these constituted their entire palette, and in addition every transition between this white and black was abrupt and harsh: the means of graduating the mass of sound did not exist. ... It is he [Aristide Cavaillé-Coll] who conceived the different wind pressures, the double action of the wind chests, the systems of combination pedals and vents, he who first employed Barker's pneumatic motors, created the family of harmonic stops,

¹⁵⁰ See Anna Sung's DMA research paper entitled "The Cavaillé-Coll Organ and César Franck's *Six Pièces*" for a more in-depth look at Franck's exploitation of the new colors and timbres of Cavaillé-Coll's instruments.

¹⁵¹ Charles-Marie Widor, "Souvenirs autobiographiques" (unpublished manuscript), 27-28, quoted in Near, "Charles-Marie Widor," 51.

¹⁵² Charles-Marie Widor, "Les orgues de Saint-Sulpice," in Gaston Lemesle, *L'église Saint-Sulpice* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1931), 138, quoted in Near, "Charles-Marie Widor," 51.

¹⁵³ Widor, *Initiation Musicale*, 54. Translation mine.

reformed and perfected the mechanism in such a way that every pipe low or high, strong or weak, instantaneously obeyed the command of the finger, the touch becoming as light as a piano's, the resistance being removed and the concentration of the instrument's strength made manageable. From this resulted: the possibility of keeping an entire organ in a sonorous cell to be opened or closed at will, freedom of association of timbres, the means of intensifying or moderating them gradually, independence of rhythms, security of attacks, balance of contrasts and finally a great blossoming of marvelous colors, a whole rich palette of the most diverse sounds—harmonic flutes, gambas, bassoons, English horns, trumpets, voix célestes, flue and reed stops of a quality and variety hitherto unknown.

Such is the modern organ, essentially symphonic. To the new instrument a new language, an ideal different from that of scholastic polyphony.¹⁵⁴

Thanks to both Cavaillé-Coll and Widor, the new capabilities and sonorities of these modern instruments were brought to life. The French symphonic organ, so very different from the instruments before, allowed composers like Widor to exploit the many new possibilities offered and to write true symphonies for organ.

¹⁵⁴ Widor, “Avant-propos” in *Complete Organ Symphonies: Series I*, ix.

Chapter 3

ROMANESQUE MANIFESTATIONS

As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, Widor's organ music is indelibly linked to the organs built by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. But a close look at the dedication of the *Symphonie Romane* and the performance tradition of playing it at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin would not be complete without a study of the work in conjunction with the Basilica itself and its specific instrument. A brief look at the *Symphonie Gothique* and its performance history provides a counterpart to the *Symphonie Romane* when considering the idea of architecture mirrored in the music. Specific issues arise when playing the *Symphonie Romane* at Saint-Sernin, and in this chapter I examine these passages. Additionally, I consider the possible Germanic influence on the work in relation to the registrational indications Widor included, and present the idea that the *Symphonie Romane* was first and foremost conceived as a piece of sacred art, irrespective of location.

The Saint-Sernin Basilica as inspiration

Unlike most other musicians, organists often have an unequaled ability to step back to a historical place to create a musical experience that is close to what would have been created by musicians in previous eras. Several factors work together to accomplish this: the organ itself, the building in which the organ is located, and the music. Musicians of all kinds have access to historical instruments which can be paired with music from the same era—e.g., using a Stradivarius violin to play music of Vivaldi—but organists in particular are able to take advantage of these instruments on a daily basis. This synthesis of instrument and corresponding

music is compelling from both historical and musical standpoints: historical in view of the fact that these were the instruments on which the music would have been performed, and musical because the instruments were often created to perform a particular genre or type of music.

Organs are unique in that they were often designed specifically for a particular space, most commonly for a religious institution. Due to their large size, vast number of components, and specific design for the room in which they were housed, many organs have remained in their original location. Historically, these instruments have been used predominantly in liturgical settings and therefore have often been kept in playing condition simply for the sake of worship. Such is the situation of some of Cavaillé-Coll's most important instruments: Widor's organ at Saint-Sulpice in Paris, the organ in the Basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, and perhaps the most famous organ in the world, the grand organ in Notre Dame de Paris.

Organists have the luxury of experiencing firsthand—particularly in many European churches—this unique marriage of time, place, instrument, and sound. This allows organists to easily create musical experiences uncannily similar to those encountered by previous generations. And in turn, such an experience can teach the performer a great deal about the music itself. Talking about the incredible opportunity of playing the Saint-Sernin Cavaillé-Coll, Michel Bouvard describes: “When I say that such an instrument is like a teacher, that is true, because it can help you understand the writing of the composers of this time, along with the colors of the registrations, the balances, the contrasts. You can immediately understand what ‘legato’ means, and how to control the sound, the tempo and the touch in a big acoustic. It’s just incredible what you can make musically with such a race horse. It’s like playing on a Stradivarius for a violinist.”¹⁵⁵ It is indeed a luxury to be able to have firsthand experience on such a great

¹⁵⁵ Daniel Hathaway, “Q&A with French organist Michel Bouvard before his Trinity Cathedral Recital October 24,” *Cleveland Classical*, October 23, 2017.

historical instrument. However, modern musicians, so often carefully focused on performance practices and the intent of the composer, need to be wary of the fallacy of imagining that the music is supposed to “live” in one particular location.

Archbold and others have discussed the correlation between Widor’s music and Cavaillé-Coll’s organs and several have included explanations of Widor’s performance practice for these instruments. John Near’s most recent book, *Widor on Organ Performance Practice and Technique*,¹⁵⁶ offers the most comprehensive study yet on this subject (though several specific suggestions for the *Symphonie Romane* are found in Near’s 1997 performance edition of the score).¹⁵⁷ A few authors have mentioned the significance of the name “Romane” as it relates to Romanesque architecture. Jimmy Jess Anthony’s dissertation on the *Romane* even proposes the possibility of the piece being structured on the Golden Section.¹⁵⁸ But none of the above-mentioned writers have explored the question of whether the dedication on the title page should demand more than a perfunctory glance.

The dedication of the *Romane* is significant for several reasons, not the least of which is the consequent unspoken performance tradition of playing the piece on the Cavaillé-Coll instrument at the Basilica. There is certainly a great deal of musical integrity in playing a work of Widor’s on an organ that is an exact contemporary to his music and one that has been relatively untouched compared to other remaining instruments by Cavaillé-Coll. But does this fact alone provide sufficient reason for a continued tradition of playing the piece at the Basilica in Toulouse, thereby suggesting that Widor intended it for that location? In 1988, Alain Hobbs

¹⁵⁶ John R. Near, *Widor on Organ Performance Practice and Technique* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2019).

¹⁵⁷ John R. Near, “Introduction” to *The Symphonies for Organ: Symphonie romane*, by Charles-Marie Widor (Middleton, Wis.: A-R Editions, 1997), vii-xxi.

¹⁵⁸ Anthony, “Symphonies pour Orgue,” 264-68.

commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Widor's death with a comprehensive French article on Widor and his music. Many people who knew Widor personally were primary sources for the article.¹⁵⁹ Hobbs includes brief analyses of the *Symphonie Gothique* and the *Symphonie Romane* and discusses the dedication Widor included in the score of the *Gothique* symphony. He suggests that instead of religion being the motivation for the composition, perhaps it was the holy space in which these pieces would have been performed. Several writers have noted that Widor was not personally very religious and Hobbs points out that "if he [Widor] composed music for the offices [religious services], it wasn't, properly speaking, religious music. He composed music to perhaps be heard in a sacred place, but that was it."¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, he states that the *Gothique* was conceived of as a work to be presented in a concert held at a church.¹⁶¹ The Parisian music scene, as well as that of Europe in general, had moved away from the idea of salon concerts and towards the twentieth-century notion of a concert, a discreet musical entity often held in a completely secular space devoted to concerts. Hobbs remarks that the rise of the "grand international concerts" of the 1880s and 90s preceded Widor's idea of holding concerts in sacred spaces and encouraged him to pursue new avenues of composition: "He began to compose in a completely new style, of which the *Symphonie gothique* was the first attempt."¹⁶²

In regard to the *Gothique*'s dedication, Hobbs proposes that it may have resulted from the impression Widor received of the church when he played the inaugural recital of the Cavaillé-Coll organ at Saint-Ouen in 1890. Regrettably, he does not include a similar study on the historical context of the *Symphonie Romane*, choosing to focus instead on the musical aspects of

¹⁵⁹ Hobbs, "Charles-Marie Widor," 1-76.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 32.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

the work, the use of the Gregorian chant themes throughout, and its influence on future organ composers.

A parallel history of the *Romane* could offer more insight on the work. First of all, if the *Gothique* can be regarded as in a “completely new style,” concert music to be performed in a religious space, then the *Romane* can also be viewed as such. Published in 1900, the *Romane* would fit in even better with the emerging concept of large, public classical music concerts (as opposed to intimate salon settings). No longer simply suites of musically-disjoint, short character pieces, this work—even more so than the *Gothique* before it—unmistakably strives for and attains the goal of being a work unified around one central idea. As Hobbs states, “It is not only of the organist of Saint-Sulpice we speak, but of one of the great musical authorities,” one who uses the Cavaillé-Coll organs to their fullest potential.¹⁶³

Playing the *Symphonie Romane* on the 1889 Cavaillé-Coll organ in the Basilica of Saint-Sernin is a memorable experience. The organ is a fantastic example of Cavaillé-Coll’s expertise in organ building and the hushed, sacred atmosphere of the Basilica is an appropriate setting for the plainsong-inspired music. It is immediately understandable why organists for so many years have desired to play the *Romane* there—the sounds of the organ are wonderfully expressive and give a brilliant sense of grandeur. The magnificent organ itself is a mature specimen of the organ builder’s work and showcases many of his remarkable innovations: a Barker machine, harmonic stops of both flute and reed varieties, a full complement of couplers between manuals and pedals, *octaves graves*, *appel* pedals, and a remarkably expressive swell box, among others. But even though the piece plays well on the instrument and in the space, one has to wonder if Widor

¹⁶³ Ibid., 33.

envisioned the *Symphonie Romane* as living in or belonging to that particular location and instrument more so than to any other Cavaillé-Coll instrument in any other church.

There are, perhaps, several clues to Widor's intent on this matter. To begin, a look at the *Symphonie Gothique*, Op. 70, is in order. This work was published in 1895 and is the sister symphony to the *Romane*. Although five years passed between the publications of the two symphonies, both featured the use of Gregorian plainsong as melodic material and both were dedicated in memory of a saint, whose corresponding churches had Cavaillé-Coll organs. Hobbs observes, "We know that Widor had been profoundly impressed by the new organ which he inaugurated in 1890 in Saint-Ouen, Rouen, and, in a certain measure, equally inspired by the church."¹⁶⁴ In 1890, Widor had played the inaugural recital of the recently installed organ of Cavaillé-Coll in the church of Saint-Ouen in Rouen, France, a reconstruction that filled the eighteenth-century organ case with a new instrument. One well-known quote by Widor displays his admiration for that particular instrument: "There is some Michelangelo in that organ."¹⁶⁵ A reviewer of Widor's recital remarked that "At the inauguration of the monumental organ of Saint-Ouen, M. Widor had promised the parish priest, M. Panel, to write a special work in honor of his admirable church."¹⁶⁶ And so, in April 1895, Widor himself returned to Rouen to give the first full performance of the *Gothique*. Albert Riemenschneider, in his program notes to Widor's symphonies, written after studying with Widor over the course of many years, states: "inspired by the beautiful church of St. Ouen at Rouen, [Widor] endeavors to portray in tone his impressions of this monumental Gothic edifice in particular, and to give to the symphony a

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 31.

¹⁶⁵ Charles-Marie Widor, "Souvenirs autobiographiques" (unpublished manuscript), 61-62, quoted in Near, *Widor*, 228.

¹⁶⁶ *Ménestrel* 61, no. 18, 143-44. Translation mine.

style of music essentially Gothique.”¹⁶⁷ The gothic church of Saint-Ouen has been further described as “giving birth to Charles-Marie Widor the desire to compose an organ symphony of a new genre”¹⁶⁸ and Hobbs agrees, remarking that the dedication of the *Gothique* “speaks of the church, not of the saint.”¹⁶⁹ This would make sense, given the visceral connection Widor seems to have felt with the instrument and the church. Heinrich Reimann, a German colleague, concurred with this idea, saying, “As the title drawing shows, the epithet does not have ethnographic but architectural significance.”¹⁷⁰ Others have gone even further, giving specific musical examples and explicitly relating them to the building, as in John Near’s brief comment that “In the *Gothique*, he had largely treated the *Puer natus est* plainsong in a traditional cantus-firmus style—in long note values and pointed rhythms, mirroring the architecture of Saint Ouen.”¹⁷¹ In his program notes, Riemenschneider declared, “The persistence of a flowing theme in eighth-notes with a chord theme as a countersubject, gives the impression of a desire to establish firmly the Gothique principles, such as the arch and flying buttress, while the climaxes rise to such impressiveness that very little imagination is needed to see before one the whole edifice in its wonderful majesty” (Figure 12).¹⁷² Although Widor did acknowledge that he loved the “massive and religious in architecture,”¹⁷³ there is no way of knowing if Riemenschneider came up with this beautifully descriptive imagery on his own or if this idea had been suggested to him by the composer himself.

¹⁶⁷ Albert Riemenschneider, “Program Notes on the Widor ‘Symphonies,’” *The American Organist* 8, no. 7 (1925): 263, quoted in John R. Near, Introduction to *The Symphonies for Organ: Symphonie gothique*, by Charles-Marie Widor (Middleton, Wis.: A-R Editions, 1996), vii.

¹⁶⁸ de Parcevaux, *Widor*, 99. Translation mine.

¹⁶⁹ Hobbs, “Charles-Marie Widor,” 32. Translation mine.

¹⁷⁰ Heinrich Reimann, “Französische Orgelkomponisten” *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 23, no. 26 (June 26, 1896): 361. Translation mine.

¹⁷¹ Near, *Widor*, 264. See also Near’s Foreword to the *Gothique* and de Parcevaux, *Widor*, 97-102.

¹⁷² Albert Riemenschneider, “Program Notes,” 268, quoted in Near, Introduction to *Symphonie gothique*, ix.

¹⁷³ Thomas, *Organ Loft Whisperings*, 42.



Figure 12: Abbatiale Saint-Ouen, Rouen¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.patrimoine-histoire.fr/Patrimoine/Rouen/Rouen-Saint-Ouen.htm>.

Others, though, have questioned whether the “gothic” symphony really portrays a gothic ambiance, wondering whether the majority of the piece is more “sulpicienne or gothique”—more closely related to the church of Saint-Sulpice than to the gothic church of Saint-Ouen. Lawrence Archbold acknowledges this issue, noting that “to what degree these architectural styles might be reflected in the music, however, remains uncertain.”¹⁷⁵ In any case, the extra-musical connection between the *Gothique* symphony and the church of Saint-Ouen is well-documented and seems to indicate that Widor thought of the piece in direct relation to the church. This, however, certainly did not stop him from performing movements of the piece regularly for Christmas masses at Saint-Sulpice, using the imaginative setting of the *Puer natus* plainsong in its intended place in the church year.¹⁷⁶

The historical record surrounding the *Romane* seems to be nowhere near as rich. And although a lack of sources cannot conclusively prove anything, it is striking to note the differences between the *Gothique* and the *Romane* in terms of the surviving historical documents. Most writings on the *Romane* include the well-known quote by Dupré that mentions Widor working on the theme for at least a year prior to the symphony’s completion.¹⁷⁷ But Widor had evidently been planning to write the *Symphonie Romane* soon after he published the *Gothique* in 1895, perhaps even viewing the two as a set. Reimann substantiates this in an 1896 article in which he mentions Widor’s last two symphonies as closely related to each other, describing them as the “promised Romane symphony ... [and] its Gothic sister.”¹⁷⁸ Widor’s intent to write the *Romane* must have been fairly well known for a German colleague to mention

¹⁷⁵ Lawrence Archbold, Review of *The Symphonies for Organ: Symphonie gothique; Symphonie romane*, by Charles-Marie Widor, edited by John R. Near, *Music & Letters* 80, no. 1 (February 1999): 173.

¹⁷⁶ Near, *Widor*, 230.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 264.

¹⁷⁸ Reimann, “Französische Orgelkomponisten,” 361. Translation mine.

it in writing. Three years later, Widor finally completed the *Romane* during his summer vacation at the family home in Persanges in 1899. Unlike the *Gothique*, there are no well-known performances by the composer that tie the music directly to the organ at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, France. The Saint-Sulpice organ was installed two years earlier than the instrument in Rouen and Alexandre Guilmant, not Widor, inaugurated the Toulouse instrument in 1889. There is no record of Widor playing the *Romane* on the instrument and Michel Bouvard, current organist *titulaire* at Saint-Sernin, is of the opinion that Widor may have never even played the instrument itself: “We do not have any traces of Charles-Marie Widor at the organ of Saint-Sernin, although we know that he inaugurated the grand organ of the Dalbade.”¹⁷⁹ And perhaps the most intriguing detail of all is the fact that Widor gave the first full performance of the symphony on a German instrument in a German church, discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

It is widely acknowledged that Widor’s last two symphonies are quite different, in many ways, from his earlier symphonies for organ. Along with the use of Gregorian chant, there is a compelling notion that the music in both symphonies relates to the two respective churches. This idea is debatable, with scholars taking differing views on whether the Romanesque church is somehow depicted in the music of the *Romane*. It seems that Widor, to some extent, considered one specific aspect of music in architectural terms:

A serious organist will never avail himself of these means of expression [changes of intensity], unless *architecturally*; that is to say, by *straight lines* and by *designs*. By *lines*, when he passes slowly from *piano* into *forte*, by a gradient almost imperceptible, and in constant progression, without break or jolt. By *designs*, when he takes advantage of a second of silence to close the swell-box abruptly between a *forte* and a *piano*. ... Every illogical variation in the intensity of the sound, every nuance which, graphically, cannot be represented by a right line, is a crime, the offence of artistic *lèse-majesté*.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Michel Bouvard, interview by the author, July 11, 2019, email. Translation mine.

¹⁸⁰ Charles-Marie Widor, Preface to *L’Orgue de Jean-Sébastien Bach*, by A. Pirro (1895), trans. by Ernst Newman (1911, reprint, New York: Dover, 1966), x-xviii, quoted in Ochse, *Organists*, 186-87.

Although Widor was describing the specifics of registrations, it is important to note how strongly he holds to the terms *designs* and *lines*, indicating that musical structure was important. But can that detail be used to suggest that the *Symphonie Romane* contains musical elements that relate to a physical aspect of architecture? Widor seems taciturn in this respect, although he does use imagery in the *Avant-propos* that seems to describe the *Gothique* in architectural terms, “the ‘Puer natus est,’ of very pure lines and solid construction, lends itself—it couldn’t be better—to polyphonic development; it’s an excellent subject to treat. Quite another is the ‘Haec dies’ [of the *Romane*], an elegant arabesque adorning a text of a few words.”¹⁸¹ The composer goes on to expound on the compositional choices he made as he sets the “fluid” theme in various ways, relinquishing true development to a theme of “inexpressible suppleness,” only to later bring it under his control, demanding a performance that exudes a sense of “calm and grandeur.”¹⁸² Nowhere else in the *Avant-propos* does he even begin to hint at a relationship to the church or the architecture (Figure 13) that may or may not have inspired him to write the piece.

Widor’s rich description of the music in relation to the architecture, as an “elegant arabesque,” invites an exploration and John Near is of the opinion that “the architectural inspiration for the *romane* was the magnificent eleventh-century Romanesque Basilica bearing the name of the missionary from Rome who evangelized the area around Toulouse and became venerated as that city’s first bishop. Both churches have superlative Cavaillé-Coll organs that Widor greatly admired. The musical style of each work reflects something of the architectural character of each church. ... The musical material of the *romane* spins out in a soft and fluid manner, as if mimicking the rounded arches of Saint-Sernin.”¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Widor, “Avant-propos,” in *The Symphonies for Organ: Symphonie romane*, xxiii.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Near, Introduction to *Romane*, viii.



Figure 13: Basilique Saint-Sernin, Toulouse¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Toulouse_Saint_Sernin_\(2012.08\)_08.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Toulouse_Saint_Sernin_(2012.08)_08.jpg) and
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Basilique_Saint-Sernin_Toulouse_03.JPG.

Near later goes on to describe the first movement in terms that seem to reinforce this stance. “An introductory arabesque, as evanescent as a whiff of incense, rises through two octaves to settle on f[♯]-sharp; hanging in the air like a ray of light.”¹⁸⁵ This, however, seems to be the only reference in Near’s writings that could be taken as pointing, even remotely, to a supposed relationship between the church and the music.

Other references to a possible correlation between the music and the church are sparse. Shin-Kyung Bang’s dissertation contains only a few vague remarks about the arch form created by the piece, stating that the opening passage “seems to depict the arches of the Romanesque church.”¹⁸⁶ Mary Elizabeth Wright, in her 1941 thesis, writes only that “the ‘Moderato,’ which is austere, angular, and impersonal, gives one [sic] atmosphere of vaulted arches and stained glass windows of the cathedral.”¹⁸⁷ Jimmy Jess Anthony looks at the issue in only slightly more detail as he hypothesizes that the form of the composition may have been created through a conscious use of the Golden Section. He briefly mentions how that might relate to the physical features of the church itself:

The most striking characteristic of Romanesque architecture—at least in the church façades—was their tripartite subdivisions, with a larger central section containing an arch over the main entry door. The basic geometric proportions formed a structural framework disguised, in a sense, by ornately carved arabesques. ... In a way that is similarly architectural, the *Symphonie romane* can be seen as having been constructed over a three-part Golden Section frame that visibly may be considered a four movement organ symphony; the melodic and rhythmic fluidity may also be seen as counterparts to the carved façade.”¹⁸⁸

Apart from Anthony’s creative interpretation, published analyses of the *Romane* seem to include far fewer references to the architectural aspects of the church in Toulouse than the

¹⁸⁵ Near, Introduction to *Romane*, xii.

¹⁸⁶ Bang, “Evolution,” 79.

¹⁸⁷ Mary Elizabeth Wright, “The Musical Contributions of Five French Organ Composers from Widor to the Present Time,” Master’s thesis (North Texas State Teachers College, 1941), 41.

¹⁸⁸ Anthony, “Symphonies pour Orgue,” 267.

explanations of the *Gothique* in relation to the Rouen church. Lawrence Archbold maintains that “identifying actual ‘gothic’ or ‘romanesque’ qualities—of whatever sort, historical or imaginative—in the music seems problematic at best,”¹⁸⁹ and Jesse Eschbach concurs, saying, “Maybe there was a certain stimulation when Widor was on those two instruments in those two basilicas, given the architecture, but to say it resulted in this specific musical event, or to say that the organ per se influenced the registration in really specific ways, [is] very problematic.”¹⁹⁰ Near seems to contradict this by saying that “The musical style of Widor’s last two symphonies not only reflect the architectural styles of the two churches to which they are dedicated, but they must also be viewed as homages to the organ builder whose unparalleled instruments provided the composer with a life of inspiration.”¹⁹¹ Near places Widor in the greater historical context of the French Romantic organ school, linking him specifically to Cavaillé-Coll and the organ builder’s instruments. Archbold points to this connection and goes even further by suggesting that the music is “enriched by ancient chant and historic architecture, yet allied to new organs ... yielding works with a deeper sense of both spirituality and historical evocation if not history itself.”¹⁹² Anne-Isabelle de Parcevaux unabashedly develops this historical frame of reference, describing the music with imaginative imagery clearly describing the building:

Taken by the hand, the listener is irresistibly launched on a voyage which goes beyond human capacities and which leaves one refined: it traverses the ages, roams the centuries, like the almost-thousand-year-old handiwork of the Toulousain builders. These men didn’t fear undertaking a work of which they would not see the completion, for they had begun not for themselves but for those who followed them. The chant, continuously restated, seems timeless, without beginning or end: in the shelter of the solid pink brick walls of the basilica, all generations sang it in turn, and will sing it forever.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Archbold, “Widor’s *Symphonie romane*,” 251-52.

¹⁹⁰ Jesse Eschbach, interview by the author, June 20, 2019, audio, 1:21:20.

¹⁹¹ Near, *Widor*, 264.

¹⁹² Archbold, “Widor’s *Symphonie romane*,” 252.

¹⁹³ de Parcevaux, *Widor*, 103-4. Translation mine.

More than simply describing the music in terms of architecture—or, conversely, questioning the appropriateness of doing so—these authors frame the *Romane* in terms of a much broader historical context, de Parcevaux going so far as to relate it to a sense of timelessness that defines the entire history of the Basilica. Rather than trying to come up with an arbitrary note-by-note analysis of the entire symphony equating it with the architectural features of the stunning Romanesque building, perhaps the piece is better served by placing it in its historical context and understanding it alongside the instrument for which it was intended: the Cavaillé-Coll organ.

Playing the *Symphonie Romane* on the 1889 Saint-Sernin Cavaillé-Coll organ

A performance of the *Symphonie Romane* in Toulouse at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin demonstrates that the published score was not intended to be played solely in that location due to several peculiarities of that particular instrument. Michel Bouvard, titular organist at Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, traces this back to Widor and the instrument the composer was most familiar with. As he explained to me, “This symphony is not absolutely dedicated to ‘the organ’ of Saint-Sernin, but is dedicated either to the Romanesque basilica of Saint-Sernin, or perhaps to Saint Saturnin himself.”¹⁹⁴

The organ itself illustrates this point in several ways, the first and most obvious being the coupler system. On most Cavaillé-Coll organs, the coupler mechanism allows the organist to couple the divisions “down” to other manuals. For example, the *Récit* division usually couples down separately to both the *Positif* and the *Grand-orgue* divisions. The *Positif* then couples down to the *Grand-orgue* division. But on both the Saint-Sernin and Saint-Ouen instruments, the couplers between the *Récit* and the *Positif* are inverted with the *Positif* coupling up to the *Récit*

¹⁹⁴ Bouvard, interview. Translation mine.

division and a single *Récit* coupler going down only to the *Grand-orgue*. The inversion of the couplers is due to the mechanics of the Barker action which was placed on two manuals, the *Récit* and the *Grand-orgue*.¹⁹⁵ For a performance of the *Symphonie Romane* at Saint-Sernin, this creates several places where it is either impossible or more difficult than otherwise to play exactly what Widor marked in the score when he calls for the *Récit* to be coupled down to the *Positif*. For instance, in mm. 38-40 of the first movement (Figure 10), Widor marks two short passages where the organist plays on the coupled *Positif* and *Récit* immediately after and then again before playing on the uncoupled *Récit*. On most instruments, one would simply move their right hand down to the *Positif* with the *Récit* coupled in. At Saint-Sernin, this requires a quick coupling and then uncoupling of the *Positif* to *Récit*—a completely workable solution but one that creates an added step for the performer. A similar passage occurs in m. 46 of the last movement and is easily solved with the same solution (Figure 14).

Figure 14: movement 4, measures 42-47

¹⁹⁵ Eschbach, interview.

In m. 74 of the first movement, Widor indicates that the left hand is to continue playing on the coupled *Positif* and *Récit* while the right hand moves up to the *Récit* alone (Figure 15). In this situation, the best compromise is to uncouple the manuals where Widor indicates for the right hand to move up to the *Récit*, creating a distinct, simultaneous change for both hands instead of the more gradual layering Widor suggested in his indications.



Figure 15: movement 1, measures 73-76

In m. 35 of the second movement, there is a similar situation where Widor indicates for the left hand to play on the coupled *Positif* and *Récit* while the right hand plays on the uncoupled *Récit* (Figure 16). At Saint-Sernin, short of having assistants quickly retire the Flûte stop on the *Grand-orgue*, engage the couplers, and then immediately reverse this in the space of a breath (an almost impossible scenario), there is no simple answer. The best solution in this case, suggested by Michel Bouvard, is that the performer change Widor's indications slightly and play the indicated *Positif* solo lines on the *Grand-orgue*, leaving the right hand to accompany on the uncoupled *Récit*.



Figure 16: movement 2, measures 35-38

The final movement also has a passage that is impossible to play on the Saint-Sernin organ exactly as indicated by Widor. In mm. 33-37, the right hand is playing the *Haec dies* theme under an inverted pedal point on the coupled *Positif* and *Récit* manuals (Figure 17). Widor indicates for the left hand to move up to the *Récit* to play an accompanimental figure, allowing the *quam fecit* melody in the pedal to be clearly heard against the *Haec dies* in the upper voice. Because of the coupling system, the best solution is to simply leave the *Positif* and *Récit* coupled together, allowing the left-hand accompanimental figure to be somewhat louder than recommended.

27 (G Fonds) (8va) (P Fonds) PR GPR

dim.

[Péd. Fonds]

30

Péd. GPR

33

p R

36

GPR

p GPR

Figure 17: movement 4, measures 27-38

Rollin Smith explains this issue, observing that Cavaillé-Coll frequently experimented with various configurations of couplers and that Widor's indications were often more standardized than the organs: "We note that from his very first *Symphonie* (1872) Widor consistently directed *PR* and yet his own organ at Saint-Sulpice did not have a *Récit* to *Positif* coupler until 1903. He wrote for a 'generic' three-manual organ and by the 1870s Cavaillé-Coll included that coupler on most of his organs."¹⁹⁶

As Ben van Oosten states, "Widor does not seem to have specifically had the organ at Saint-Sernin in Toulouse in his sonic conception of the *Symphonie Romane*. For example, in the third movement he asks for a *Positif expressif* that does not exist on the organ of Saint-Sernin."¹⁹⁷ An expressive *Positif* manual is not vital to a performance of the second movement, though, and plays only a minor role in the accompaniment line. The two corresponding passages have dynamic markings to emphasize an interesting harmonic move in mm. 17-18 and then again in mm. 41-42 (Figure 18). On the Saint-Sernin organ, and any other instrument without an enclosed *Positif*, the most effective answer is to emphasize the chords through lengthening the notes just slightly.

Arguably, one might point out that Widor published this piece and in the interest of providing an accessible work, he most likely would have given indications that would apply to the majority of instruments. In addition, as a performer, Widor would have certainly allowed himself the latitude to make such changes in the interest of playing the piece, as he clearly did when performing it on the Sauer organ in Berlin. If he had truly been writing with the Saint-Sernin organ in mind, though, one could argue that he might not have written such passages in the first place, instead finding a different configuration of manuals so that the work would fit that

¹⁹⁶ Rollin Smith, "Cavaillé-Coll's influence on organ composers," *Organists' Review* (May 2006), 16.

¹⁹⁷ van Oosten, *Charles-Marie Widor*, 578. Translation mine.

instrument. In addition, scholars agree that there are several other peculiarities in the *Romane* score that seem to underscore the idea that the symphony was most likely created with the Saint-Sulpice organ in mind.



Figure 18: movement 3, measures 17-18 and 41-42

At the beginning of the *Choral* movement, Widor calls for the Flûte 8' on the *Grand-orgue* division to be accompanied by the *Récit* Flûtes 8' and 4'. On many French instruments, this registration can sound imbalanced, with the *Récit* accompaniment being overpowered. However, when played on the organ at Saint-Sulpice, it balances perfectly due to the unique placement of the *Récit* division high above the rest of the organ, allowing the division to sing into the room. This particular placement of the division was designed by Cavaillé-Coll in an effort to prevent

the 32' façade pipes from trapping the sounds of the *Récit* division in a more standard placement.¹⁹⁸ Having played the *Symphonie Romane* at both Saint-Sernin and Saint-Sulpice, Michel Bouvard stated in an interview, “I am convinced that Widor wrote this symphony for the organ at Saint-Sulpice, and in any case, it’s evident to me that he conceived the registrations and all of the writing of the piece for the organ of Saint-Sulpice. ... In working on and in registering the piece on the organ of Saint-Sulpice, I found that it is on this organ that the piece sounds the best.”¹⁹⁹

As mentioned, however, the Saint-Sulpice organ is not a perfect fit for the piece either, due to Widor’s odd (for the time) registrational indication at the beginning of the work. Several scholars have noted the fascinating yet problematic issue of the registration Widor indicated for the opening movement of the *Symphonie Romane*: “Fonds 8', 4', 2', Mixtures” on all three manuals, the *Grand-orgue*, *Positif*, and *Récit*. Before 1900, French organs did not typically have a full *plein jeu* available on the enclosed *Récit* division—it was only after the turn of the century that mixtures began to be added to the *Récit* with any regularity.²⁰⁰ In addition, the word *Mixtures* is a German term—as opposed to the French mixtures labeled *Plein jeu*, *Fourniture*, or *Cymbale*—a term that Widor, as an international musician, would have known from the organ recitals he gave in Germany.²⁰¹ French organists have noted that the *Symphonie Romane* is one of the earliest examples of this particular registration and it would have been possible to achieve on the Cavaillé-Coll organ at Saint-Sulpice. However, such a registration at Saint-Sulpice would be an odd choice, given that the *Récit* division had formerly been the Clicquot organ’s *Positif*

¹⁹⁸ Fraser, dir., *Widor: Master of the Organ Symphony*, Part II.

¹⁹⁹ Bouvard, interview. Translation mine.

²⁰⁰ A *plein jeu* registration consists of a full complement of principal stops from 16' up to 2' that includes mixtures at both higher and lower pitch levels.

²⁰¹ Eschbach, interview.

division and the mixtures are based on 16' foundations, thereby creating a series of harmonic overtones that are not natural to the 8' foundations in Widor's indicated registration.²⁰² A registration that begins at 8' but includes 16'-based mixtures would have sounded wrong to the organists of the nineteenth century and gone against the classical principles of organ-building.

Not only is this registration problematic at Saint-Sulpice, but it is also complicated at the Saint-Sernin organ where there are no true mixtures on the *Récit* division (see Appendix 1 for full stoplists for both organs). The *Récit* contains only a five-rank *Cornet*, the *Positif* has a *Carillon I-III* rank, and the *Grand-orgue* division contains both a five-rank 16'-based *Fourniture* and a four-rank *Cymbale*.²⁰³ The use of either of these mixtures against the available 8', 4', and 2' foundations in the *Récit* line at the beginning would create an unbalanced sound, leading Michel Bouvard to suggest using simply 8', 4', 2' foundations in the *Récit*, 8' and 4' foundations in the *Positif*, and 8', 4', 2', and 2 2/3' in the *Grand-orgue*, a more balanced sound.²⁰⁴ This registration, although slightly altered from Widor's suggestion, does not sound thin. As noted by Daniel Roth and Pierre-François Dub-Attenti, a lack of mixtures and mutations in specific divisions on Cavaillé-Coll's instruments does not always make as much of a difference as it might on the organs of other builders: "The richness of sound one wants from such stops is in fact present when listening to the instrument, albeit created by other means. Even with the relative lack of mutation stops, the Cavaillé-Coll organ does not lack harmonics, nor does it sound heavy. This is primarily thanks to strong wind pressure and wonderful voicing, particularly of the reeds, which reinforce these harmonics."²⁰⁵ Widor's opening registration with mixtures is an unusual

²⁰² Roth and Dub-Attenti, *The Neoclassical Organ*, 30.

²⁰³ A *Cornet* is typically a five-rank solo stop made up of ranks of pipes at 8', 4', 2', 2 2/3', and 1 3/5'. The mixtures on the *Positif* and *Grand-orgue* are based on various pitch levels and are used in combination with other stops.

²⁰⁴ Suggestion made during the course of my studies with him, Fall 2015.

²⁰⁵ Roth and Dub-Attenti, *The Neoclassical Organ*, 27.

indication when considered in conjunction with both his instrument at Saint-Sulpice and the Saint-Sernin organ. It does, however, seem to lend credence to the idea that he was composing for a more generic organ in the interest of making the piece accessible for other organists.

A Germanic influence?

The innate issues of Widor's suggested registrations in regards to the Saint-Sernin and Saint-Sulpice organs may also be explained in two other ways, both related to Widor's choice to publish the piece through Hamelle. As mentioned above, Widor was truly an international musician and, as such, the music he published was bought by organists all over the continent, in Great Britain, and in the United States. A registration that called simply for "Foundations 8', 4', 2', Mixtures" could have been a "safe" or more universal registration to include, as it allowed each organist to create a registration that fit the characteristics of their own instruments. French organists at churches with smaller instruments based on 8' (and therefore with 8'-based mixtures) would easily be able to create this particular registration, as would organists who played German instruments. And for many organists in Great Britain or the United States, these registrations would not pose a problem. Jesse Eschbach stated during an interview with me that "Widor understood perfectly well that no one had access to a five-manual instrument" as the composer did at Saint-Sulpice.²⁰⁶ It is important to note that in this line of thinking, Widor would have also recognized that most organists did not have access to the organ at Saint-Sernin and he would have therefore most likely refrained from making the piece too specifically connected to the organ at the Basilica. Eschbach went on to say that most of the French organ composers "were concocting a general, three-manual instrument, with typical resources" as they created their

²⁰⁶ Eschbach, interview.

registrations because “Widor was well aware of what was going on in other nationalities. He knew that when he went to play in Germany that he would probably find traditional mixtures on all the *werks*, on all the divisions and keyboards.”²⁰⁷

Widor had many connections in Germany specifically, where he attended the first Bayreuth Festival and played and conducted many concerts and recitals of his own music. Widor’s compositions were well known there and, to the dismay of Heinrich Reimann, perhaps too popular, since something of a musical “foreign domination” had been created under which German composers and publishers were more interested in music that seemed to evoke a French character.²⁰⁸ The majority of Widor’s music was published by French publishing houses but a significant number of his compositions received their first publication in Germany, including the *Symphonie Gothique*. Widor’s first four organ symphonies were published by the Parisian publishing house Maho, which became Hamelle in 1877. Hamelle published the remainder of Widor’s organ symphonies, with the single exception of the *Gothique*, which was commissioned to be published by Schott, a well-known German publishing firm.²⁰⁹

But the musical influences seem to have gone both ways between the two countries, as previously demonstrated by the work of the Société Nationale who, in their efforts to create serious French music, served as “one of the most important conduits for German influence on French music.”²¹⁰ Albert Schweitzer pointed out a German connection to Widor’s music, quoting the composer who said, “I find only that change in tone color right which is unmistakably required by the climax of the piece. The simpler our registration is, the closer we come to Bach.’

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Heinrich Reimann, “Orgel-Sonaten. Kritische Gänge,” *Allgemeine Music-Zeitung* 21/46 (November 16, 1894): 603, in Christopher Anderson, *Musical Offering: Karl Straube and His Time* (forthcoming), np.

²⁰⁹ Near, *Widor*, 228.

²¹⁰ Strasser, “The Société Nationale,” 251.

In his *Symphonie Romane*—the only registration in the first ten pages consists in adding the mixtures and reeds from time to time to the coupled foundation stops. Of course one should not forget that the French swell, in its effect on the entire instrument, makes a great deal possible.”²¹¹ Although Schweitzer himself was Alsatian and was even more attuned to the music of Bach than Widor was, it is clear that he attributed Widor’s registrational choices to the influence of the German composer. Eschbach agrees, noting that Widor’s premiere of the work in Germany should perhaps have “more influence on the piece than going to St. Ouen or St. Sernin for the registrations ... [and] his previous experience in Germany, dictated a lot about how the piece was registered. ... His music was international, it was getting around, it was getting performed.”²¹²

A close connection, slightly colored by Germanic influences, exists between Widor’s organ symphonies and the Cavaillé-Coll organs. But it seems—at least for the published *Symphonie Romane*—that the composer did not envisage the work as living solely on the Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin or even at the church of Saint-Sulpice. Instead, with its inclusion of the Gregorian chant, Widor viewed the symphony as a great work of sacred art, transcending a specific location.

The *Symphonie Romane* as sacred art

Louis Vierne, in his review of the first eight organ symphonies of Widor in 1902, remarked that in the *Gothique* and *Romane* symphonies, “Widor returns to the traditions of yesteryear, to grave and solemn ways, to themes of austere serenity and all imbued with the plainchant of the old organs of bygone days. Certainly he does not abandon any of the hard won modern features, but

²¹¹ Joy, *Music in the Life*, 170-71.

²¹² Eschbach, interview.

he imposes on them a classic turn and shape.”²¹³ In the late 1880s, through the efforts of the community at Solesmes and later by Pope Pius X, plainsong began to receive renewed interest. Widor was outspoken in his opinions on the restoration efforts, and he insisted that the Solesmes efforts were obscuring the “primitive purity” of the chants by returning to neume notation and suppressing the feeling of the music.²¹⁴ Perhaps his inclusion of chant in his last two symphonies, particularly his setting of the *Haec dies* in the *Symphonie Romane* in various rhythmical notations, was a way to continue the “living tradition that had been unfolding and developing for centuries.”²¹⁵ This return to plainchant in Widor’s last two symphonies has been discussed by several writers as they point out the concurrent trends in church music reforms.²¹⁶ Lawrence Archbold, in particular, goes into great detail in analyzing the keys, themes, and appearances of the chant and chant fragments, and discusses the Wagnerian influence in this work.²¹⁷ As the most compositionally sophisticated of the ten organ symphonies, Archbold considers the *Romane* as both the culmination of Widor’s work in this genre and as his most important composition.

The idea of a sacred or spiritual aspect to the work has also been much discussed and is perhaps a more pertinent way to approach the piece. Instead of having a particular church in mind for the performance of the work—and thus, a particular organ—perhaps Widor envisaged the music as transcending the limitations of a performance in a single locale to evoke a musical and spiritual picture of the Basilica of Saint-Sernin. Archbold asserts that the *Romane* “shows its

²¹³ Louis Vierne, “Les Symphonies pour orgue de Ch.-M. Widor,” *Le Guide musical* (April 6, 1902), 320, in Archbold, *French Organ Music*, 249.

²¹⁴ Near, *Widor*, 231-33.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 232.

²¹⁶ See Near, *Widor*, 226-36, Archbold’s “Symphonie Romane,” Anthony’s DMA dissertation, and Near’s Introduction to the *Gothique*.

²¹⁷ Archbold, “Widor’s *Symphonie romane*,” 249-74.

composer to be meaningfully engaged ... in the search for a more spiritual musical style.”²¹⁸ The idea of instrumental music as being spiritually meaningful comes directly from the Beethoven tradition, with authors such as A. B. Marx and Arthur Schopenhauer focused on the transcendent aspect of the music. The description of Albert Schweitzer supports this as he explained the difference between Widor’s earlier organ symphonies and the last two in rather a Germanic-sounding description: “the austere appears ever more clearly—the austere that Widor brings back to sacred art in his last two symphonies. ‘It is noteworthy,’ he [Widor] said to me in that period, ‘that except for Bach’s preludes and fugues—or, rather, except for certain preludes and fugues of Bach—I can no longer think of any organ art as holy which is not consecrated to the church through its themes, whether it be from the chorale or from the Gregorian chant.’”²¹⁹ The idea of organ music as “sacred art” also corresponds with the hypothesis offered by Guy Bovet that the aging Widor perhaps considered these two works “a musical testament.”²²⁰

Widor was keenly aware of the sense of the spiritual. In quoting Widor, Schweitzer relates that the composer believed that playing the organ “is the manifestation of a will filled with a vision of eternity. All organ instruction, both technical and artistic, has as its aim only to educate a man to this pure manifestation of the higher will. This will, expressed by the organist in the objectivity of his organ, should overwhelm the hearer ... for the organ represents the *rapprochement* of the human spirit to the eternal, imperishable spirit.”²²¹ This reconciliation of the human spirit with the eternal spirit is evident in both of Widor’s last two symphonies, since, as noticed by John Near, “The spiritual ideal begun in the *Symphonie gothique* culminated five

²¹⁸ Ibid., 252.

²¹⁹ Joy, *Music in the Life*, 174.

²²⁰ Bovet, “La Symphonie Romane,” 19. Translation mine.

²²¹ Joy, *Music in the Life*, 168-69.

years later with the *Symphonie romane*” as the Christmas plainchant in the *Gothique* moves to the Easter chants in the *Romane*, bringing Widor’s “doctrinal beliefs full circle.”²²²

The *Romane* is often regarded as one of Widor’s finest compositions and the culmination of his organ symphonies. As Widor once stated, “The nature of a masterpiece is to remain eternally new; time glides by without leaving its mark on it.”²²³ This eternal newness, imbued in the work through the use of the Easter plainchant’s resurrection text, creates a sense of timelessness in the *Symphonie Romane*. Although a performance of the work at the Basilica is an incredible experience, viewing the composition as Widor did—a work of sacred art—frees the music from “living” in a particular location. Therefore, an objective historical analysis of the *Symphonie Romane* may be more beneficial to performers than simply viewing the *Symphonie Romane* as directly corresponding to the architecture of the Saint-Sernin Basilica. Widor’s own premiere of the work brings up several intriguing questions which are considered in the following chapter, along with a look at the origins of the performance tradition at Saint-Sernin.

²²² Near, *Widor*, 265.

²²³ Charles-Marie Widor, “Revue musicale,” *Estafette* (February 10, 1879), quoted in Near, *Widor*, 266.

Chapter 4

QUESTIONING PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS

Serious performers strive to create a visceral sense of connection with the music they play and performing the *Romane* on the instrument at Saint-Sernin can impart a genuine sense of understanding the music in a deeper and more meaningful way. For many players, it creates an almost mystical sense of connectedness with Widor and his music. Apart from this quasi-religious experience, however, many musicians acknowledge what an incredible, rare opportunity it is to create music on historical instruments in their original, historic spaces. Perhaps it is this realization along with the intangible sense of connection to Widor that sparked the tradition of performing the *Romane* at Saint-Sernin. Over a half-dozen commercial recordings of the *Romane* have been made at Saint-Sernin by multiple well-known organists of several nationalities (Table 1) and countless live performances have been given there as well.

In spite of the abundance of recordings made of the *Romane* at Saint-Sernin, no recording can ever substitute for the experience of playing the work there, an experience I shared while completing my organ *en perfectionnement* studies in Toulouse in 2015-16. Performing the work, I found an almost transcendent quality presenting itself in the soaring lines of the opening movement, leaving the listeners feeling as if they were suspended indefinitely along with the elegant arabesque lines. The rich timbres of the instrument soon provide a sense of being grounded through the use of sizzling reeds and sonorous *tutti* registrations of the first movement while the swell shades provide myriad additional colors and shading.

Bouvard, Michel, organist. *Louis Vierne: Messe solennelle, Charles-Marie Widor: Symphonie 'Romane.'* With Ensemble Les Éléments and Joël Suhubiette. Recorded August 30 – September 2, 1996. Tempéraments TEM 3160081996, 1996, compact disc.

Chorzempa, Daniel. *Widor: Symphonies No. 5 & No. 10 "Romane."* Recorded July, 1981. Phillips Digital Classics 410 054-2, 1982, compact disc.

Nolan, Joseph. *Charles-Marie Widor: The Organ Symphonies*, Vol. 5. Signum Classics SIGCD347, 2016, compact disc.

Pierre, Odile. *Widor*, Vol. 1. RCA RL 37394, 1980, LP.

Pincemaille, Pierre. *Les 10 Symphonies pour orgue interprétées sur 10 des plus beaux instruments d'Aristide Cavaillé-Coll.* Disques du Solstice SOCD 181/5, 2000, 5 compact discs.

van Oosten, Ben. *Charles-Marie Widor: Complete Organ Works*, Vol. 6. Recorded January 13-14, 1998. MDG Gold MDG 316 0406-2, 1998, compact disc.

van Vliet, Herman. *Widoriade: 10 Symphonies pour orgue*, Vol. III. Edition Festivo CD 147/148, 1998, 2 compact discs.

Table 1: Commercial recordings of Widor's *Symphonie Romane* made at Saint-Sernin, Toulouse

The round, clear *fonds* of the Récit furnish a rich backdrop for the second movement's use of the strikingly large harmonic flute on the *Grand-orgue* manual with its prodigious and powerful speech. Widor places the sensual strings against both the flute and the Pedal solo line and creates a balance and a sound palate not always easily achieved on American instruments. It is, perhaps, in the third movement that the exquisite voicing of the Cavaillé-Coll instrument is most pronounced. Here, the use of the *boîte expressive* is of utmost importance in shaping the meandering solo Clarinette line, displaying the full range of dynamics that can be achieved through a meticulous, practiced control of the heavy swell pedal. The last movement uses the various *tutti* combinations to great effect while showing off the robust and intoxicating power of the instrument. Both performer and audience are struck by the sheer strength of this instrument. But instead of simply staying at full organ for the entire ten minutes of the Final, Widor directs

the organist to almost continuously create crescendos and decrescendos, thus emphasizing the vast differences in the tonal palette that can be created by a careful use of registration. The music clearly speaks into the nave and swirls around the building while the acoustics of the church allow the sound to blossom and develop. In the final coda section, as the music returns to the opening of the symphony, the listeners are once again enveloped in the haunting melody of the *Haec dies* and are left with a feeling of timelessness. The final, long-lasting chord, once released, leaves the hearers spellbound, contemplating the sense of eternity that the music so beautifully displays. Even without the Gregorian chant text, it seems clear to me that Widor accomplished his intention of creating a work of sacred art that—to the performer—can provide a mystical sense of tradition.

This feeling of being in a long historical tradition can also convey a sense of following the composer's intent for the *Romane*. Richard Taruskin remarks, "We tend to assume that if we can re-create all the external conditions that obtained in the original performance of a piece we will thus recreate the composer's inner experience of the piece and thus allow him to speak for himself."²²⁴ Widor himself performed the *Symphonie Gothique* in the related church and organists have continued this performance tradition, recording and playing the work at Saint-Ouen. But the historical record does not show that Widor performed the *Symphonie Romane* at Saint-Sernin. Additionally, performers are no longer able to re-create Widor's premiere of the work in the German church. Taruskin calls this desire to be authentic (through closely following the composer's intent) a chimaera and states that, "even at their best and most successful ...

²²⁴ Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 55.

historical reconstructionist performances are in no sense re-creations of the past. They are quintessentially modern performances ... the product of an esthetic wholly of our own era.”²²⁵

As explored previously in this thesis, the dedication of the piece is significant for several reasons, not the least of which is the creation of the unspoken tradition of playing the piece on the Cavaillé-Coll instrument at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin. Performances and recordings of the *Romane* played at Saint-Sernin by such prominent organists subtly underscore the idea that contemporary organists are indeed interested in the synthesis created by the music, the Cavaillé-Coll organ, and the architectural space of the church dedicated to the saint. It is wonderful to be able to play a work of Widor’s on an organ that is an exact contemporary to his music and one that has been relatively untouched compared to other instruments by the revered organ builder. But modern organists need to be aware that playing the *Romane* at Saint-Sernin—although musically valid and not detrimental in any way—is indeed modern performance practice. Christophe Mantoux, French organist and professor of organ at the Paris Regional Conservatoire, commented on this, saying, “It’s an interesting experience. You have to make this experience in going before saying no [it is not imperative to play it at Saint-Sernin]. ... I have heard both symphonies [*Gothique* and *Romane*] in both places [Saint-Ouen and Saint-Sernin] ... and I have heard them elsewhere and I have not the feeling that ‘Wow, no, there is something that is lost when you play them elsewhere.’”²²⁶ Although the music has such a close association with Cavaillé-Coll’s instruments, the *Romane* does not belong only on those organs, as evidenced by Widor’s own premiere of the work. Taruskin notes, “Sometimes the assumption that the sense of the music is identical with the sound of the medium can go to bemusing lengths,” a description

²²⁵ Ibid., 60.

²²⁶ Christophe Mantoux, interview by the author, December 4, 2019, audio, 1:25:11.

that seems quite apropos to a study of this work.²²⁷ This performance tradition at Saint-Sernin, more than simply a study of Widor's music on Cavallé-Coll's instruments, seems instead to be an ideological construct, a way for (particularly non-French) organists to personally connect with a seminal figure in the French organ school and thus gain credibility and authority by proximity.

To explore this idea in more detail, I conducted a series of interviews with four prominent French and American organists and scholars in late 2018 and early 2019. Michel Bouvard, titular organist at Saint-Sernin, confirmed via email many of the same thoughts and impressions on the *Romane* that he had mentioned during my year of study with him in 2015-16. Christophe Mantoux provided valuable observations on Widor's reputation among French organists in the 1970s onward while George Baker, American organist, provided thoughts and impressions of Widor among American organ professors and students during the same time frame. Jesse Eschbach, scholar and organ professor, confirmed many of these same observations while also delving into specific complications of playing the *Romane* on both the Saint-Sulpice and Saint-Sernin organs. Each conversation provided additional historical context and more nuance to the issue at hand. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that one important detail of the *Symphonie Romane*'s history is often overlooked by modern-day performers—Widor's premiere of the piece in an unexpected location. In an intriguing twist, the composer's first official performance of the work was not at the Saint-Sernin Basilica but instead at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin, Germany, a circumstance which poses some intriguing questions.

²²⁷ Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 76.

Widor's performance of the *Symphonie Romane* in Germany

Shortly after Aristide Cavaillé-Coll completed his restoration of the Saint-Sernin organ, Alexandre Guilmant played the inaugural recital on April 3, 1889. Although Widor laid claim to the title of Cavaillé-Coll's favorite organist for dedicatory recitals, Guilmant came in a close second, often performing concerts on new or recently restored instruments by the builder. More than a decade passed between the inauguration of the instrument and the composition of the *Romane*, giving Widor ample time to visit that particular organ. In fact, it is highly likely that Widor would have been able to play the instrument even before it was finished. Widor was in Toulouse in late 1888 to dedicate a Puget organ in another Toulousain church, Notre-Dame de la Dalbade, on November 22.²²⁸ Considering his close relationship with Cavaillé-Coll and his interest in and experience with so many of the organ builder's other instruments, it stands to reason that Widor would have taken the time to travel the one mile separating the two churches to see an organ in the final stages of completion, especially one built by such a close friend.

Widor was extremely busy during the next decade, touring in Europe, England, and Russia, composing and premiering many of his most important compositions, and beginning his long tenure as professor at the Paris Conservatoire. There seems to be no record of his appearing in Toulouse in a professional aspect during this time, but he frequently appeared in other cities throughout the south of France and he continued to take his regular summer vacations in Lyon, where he finished composing the *Romane* in the summer of 1899.²²⁹ As with the *Gothique*, Widor himself premiered the entire work on January 6, 1900, only a few months after completing the work. But this time, instead of performing it on the instrument in the French

²²⁸ Near, *Widor*, 458.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 458-59.

church which the dedication references, Widor premiered it in Germany. Surprisingly, the performance seemed to be so greatly overshadowed by the orchestral concerts he conducted while in Berlin that in a letter the next day, he barely even mentioned the fact that he had played an organ recital! He stated simply that “Yesterday there was an organ performance that went very well, and last evening a chamber music performance that was also very good.”²³⁰

The performance was held at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin and the instrument that Widor played, later destroyed during World War II, was a new, highly-praised Wilhelm Sauer organ, op. 660. The organ was completed in 1895 with a substantial addition in 1897 and was described as being in “the very first rank among the organs of the whole world.”²³¹ The organ was a large German Romantic instrument with ninety-one stops on four manuals, quite different in timbre from the French instruments that Widor was accustomed to playing but in keeping with the idea of using a symphonic organ—a highly expressive, colorful instrument with many stops—to play an organ symphony.²³² Prior to Widor’s performance of the *Romane* on the Sauer instrument in Berlin, he had performed on another new Sauer organ, also in Berlin. In 1895, Widor served as one of two French judges on the International Rubenstein Competition jury. While there, he was asked by the other jury members to play for them and so he gave a performance on the 1894 Sauer organ at the Apostel-Paulus church.²³³ The instrument in that church, also destroyed during World War II, originally contained sixty ranks of pipes and would

²³⁰ Widor to Marie Trélat, January 7, 1900, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collection, Sibley Music Library, Eastman School of Music, in Near, *Widor*, 267.

²³¹ Christopher Anderson, *Max Reger and Karl Straube: Perspectives on an Organ Performing Tradition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 22-25; Heinrich Reimann, “Die Orgel in der Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche zu Charlottenburg-Berlin,” *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 24/12 (May 19, 1897): 178. Translation mine.

²³² Michael Murray, “Charles-Marie Widor,” in *French Masters of the Organ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 89-107.

²³³ *Ménestral* 61, no. 35 (September 1, 1895): 278.

have provided Widor with a full complement of orchestral sounds.²³⁴ Having become acquainted with both the possibilities and limitations of the Sauer organ, Widor gained valuable knowledge that he most certainly would have put to good use when preparing again to play his own music on another instrument by the German builder.

The Gëdachtniskirche was built in the 1890s in a neo-Romanesque architectural style. Although only the west tower of this church remains after the destruction of World War II, the Romanesque influence on the architecture is still evident. Perhaps it was partly for this reason that Widor premiered the symphony there, creating an obvious symmetry between the title of the work and the space. It is intriguing to note that in spite of the historical documentation of Widor's premiere of the piece in a neo-Romanesque church in Berlin, the dialogue around the *Symphonie Romane* seems to skim over the fact that Widor clearly thought the work worthy of performing on a Sauer instrument. Due to the complete destruction of the instrument and the building during World War II, no modern-day performance tradition exists of playing the *Symphonie Romane* in that location, but one is left to wonder if a performance tradition there would have otherwise come into existence.

Widor's reasons for performing the premiere of the *Symphonie Romane* in Germany are not entirely understood. Presumably, he would have been invited by Heinrich Reimann, organist at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gëdachtniskirche, who knew Widor and had previously heard him

²³⁴ Wilhelm Sauer was at least somewhat influenced by Cavaillé-Coll; he worked in the French organ builder's Paris workshop for around a year in 1852. See Paul Peeter's essay, "Walcker and Cavaillé-Coll: A Franco-German Competition," in *The Organ as a Mirror of its Time: North European Reflections, 1610-2000*, ed. Kerala J. Snyder (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 242-60.

perform.²³⁵ Several scholars have mentioned that perhaps Widor performed the *Romane* for the first time at this church for what can be thought of as nationalistic reasons.²³⁶ Widor, as a member of the Société Nationale, may have played the *Romane* as a way to demonstrate that French composers were capable of writing serious, transcendent—or, in this case, spiritual—music.

The nationalist tendencies of German musicologists in this time period are well documented and one musicologist and organist in Berlin particularly outspoken against the French organists and organ music was Dr. Heinrich Reimann himself. He was appointed as organist at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in 1895 and was an influential writer and music critic. In 1896, he published an essay titled “Französische Orgelkomponisten” and included a description of Widor as organist and composer, praising him highly for his technical prowess.²³⁷ Reimann then discussed what he imagined to be the innate limitations of French composers. Although the language is couched in niceties, it is clear that he condescendingly viewed Widor’s French nationality as a hindrance when it came to the Frenchman’s compositions: “the composer bears Bach in his head and fingers, but not in his heart ... This is due to the [French] national character and to the development of the composer himself, who has made a serious effort to adapt Bach’s style to his subjective feelings, without ever having the opportunity to learn and sympathize with Bach’s spirit. To reproach Widor of it would be as unjust as foolish. His ‘Symphonie Gothique’ remains a significant work. May the promised ‘romanesque’ symphony

²³⁵ Widor’s professional relationship with Reimann could form the basis for an interesting study. Reimann did not serve on the jury of the 1895 Rubenstein competition and it is not clear if Widor and Reimann had previously met. However, at the conclusion of the 1895 Anton Rubenstein competition, Widor visited the National Library in Berlin where Dr. Reimann was the conservator (Near, *Widor*, 238). At the very least, a professional connection was established between the two men because in 1899, Albert Schweitzer came to Berlin and presented to Dr. Reimann a letter of introduction from Widor (Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought: An Autobiography*, trans. A. B. Lemke (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1950), 22.

²³⁶ Peter Kupfer and Christopher Anderson, in conversation with the author, November 19, 2018.

²³⁷ Reimann, “Französische Orgelkomponisten” 359-61.

be worthy of its Gothic sister!”²³⁸ Widor would have been well aware of these writings and it is certainly plausible to imagine that Widor may have used the performance of the *Romane* as a sort of response to Reimann, demonstrating that the French composers could indeed write contrapuntal, symphonic organ music.

Eugène de Bricqueville, French organist and musicologist, reviewed Widor’s orchestral concerts and organ recital in Berlin in January 1900, giving compelling evidence for the idea of a nationalistic scuffle when it came to the music itself: “An organ recital by Widor, at the Gedachtniss Kirche [sic], attracted all that are counted as serious musicians in Berlin. Widor marvelously played there the *Symphonie romane*, an unpublished work, and the Fantasia and Fugue in G minor by Bach. The attempts of MM. Widor ... are very interesting, in the sense that the Germans believe they possess the monopoly in symphonic art and chamber music and readily persuade themselves that nothing dignified in this serious art has been produced elsewhere than in Germany.”²³⁹ From de Bricqueville’s account, it does not seem far-fetched to think that Widor’s performance of his own organ symphony could have been regarded as an attempt to exhibit “worthy” French music to the German public.

The invented performance tradition

Setting aside the fact that Widor premiered the work in Berlin, there are no historical records that indicate that Widor ever performed the *Symphonie Romane* in the Basilica of Saint-Sernin. So why has the tradition of performing it there arisen when, as discussed earlier, the organ there does not fit the music as well as expected? Michel Bouvard stated, “I know that there are many

²³⁸ Ibid., 361. Translation mine.

²³⁹ Eugène de Bricqueville, *Ménestrel* 66, no. 1 (January 7, 1900): 14. Translation mine.

organists (not only Americans) who have come, or who want to come to Saint-Sernin to play the *Symphonie Romane* at Saint-Sernin, it's very touching and it also sounds very good, but I truly don't believe that the piece has a direct connection with the instrument at Saint-Sernin."²⁴⁰ Yet modern-day musicians, by continuing to specifically record, perform, and study the *Symphonie Romane* on the instrument in the Basilica, are subscribing to and perpetuating a tradition of performing the *Romane* in Saint-Sernin, even though—unlike the *Gothique*—there is a lack of historical precedent set by the composer.

In their influential book *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger lay out a novel theory regarding how some traditions come into being.²⁴¹ This theory hinges on repetition: a tradition is created by a conscious, repeated recurrence of an event. It can be difficult and sometimes impossible to pinpoint the exact moment when a tradition begins since, as they state, traditions may be “actually invented, constructed and formally instituted” or they may be “partly invented, partly evolved in private groups ... or informally over a period of time.”²⁴² In the case of the *Romane*, the tradition of performing the piece at Saint-Sernin seems to be the latter as performers have increasingly taken Widor's dedication as a performance directive.

When I traveled to Toulouse to study organ on a Fulbright grant, many other organists made comments to the effect of “you *must* play the *Romane* at Saint-Sernin!” This “quasi-obligatory repetition” of performing this particular work in the Basilica of Saint-Sernin constitutes what Hobsbawm and Ranger call an *invented tradition*.²⁴³ As the authors point out, an

²⁴⁰ Bouvard, interview. Translation mine.

²⁴¹ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-14.

²⁴² Ibid., 1; 4.

²⁴³ Ibid., 2.

invented tradition such as this “is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. ... However, insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of ‘invented’ traditions is that the continuity with it is largely factitious.”²⁴⁴ The set of practices, performing the *Romane* in the Basilica, is indeed governed by tacitly or subconsciously accepted rules, the idea that if an organist has the opportunity to play the instrument at Saint-Sernin, they should most definitely play the *Romane*. Not only has this become a ritual, but the practice symbolically serves as a means to understanding the work better or perhaps as a way to be more in touch with Widor’s (supposed) intent. This mystical sense of encountering Widor’s music in the place it is believed to “belong” is the element which seems to create a continuity with the past. Therefore, playing this work at Saint-Sernin perpetuates the idea that organists are able to engage with this music in a way that is not possible elsewhere. Although the desire for a continuity with the musical heritage of the past (even if it is invented) is in no way harmful, it is appropriate and responsible to attempt to decipher where such practices originated so that the implicitly accepted behaviors are better understood. Modern musicologists have increasingly turned towards ideological critiques and a deep questioning of why the classical music tradition exists in its present form.²⁴⁵ Taruskin regards the performer’s task in interpreting the music as “to foster an approach to performance that is founded to an unprecedented degree on personal conviction and on individual response to individual pieces. Such an approach will seek to bring to consciousness

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 1-2.

²⁴⁵ For seminal works establishing a more “critical” musicology, see Joseph Kerman’s *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), and Susan McClary’s *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). For a clear general overview, see Nicholas Cook’s *Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

and thereby to transcend the constraints that are variously imposed by fashion, by convention training, by historical evidence, and even, or especially, by our intuition. And this means, ultimately, cultivating an essentially skeptical frame of mind that will allow no ‘truth’ to pass unexamined.”²⁴⁶ As such, it is necessary to examine every facet of the performance tradition of the *Romane*. Research on the origins of the tradition may provide the framework for a deeper understanding of how and why such traditions are initiated.

American interest in the French organ school

It is difficult, if not impossible, to identify exactly when the invented tradition of performing the *Symphonie Romane* at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin originated. Nevertheless, American organists in particular seem interested in continuing this tradition, as evidenced by the comments referenced earlier. These opinions may have grown out of American organists’ reverence for French organ music that began in the late 1800s—aided by the friendly political climate between the two countries—and the subsequent sacrosanctity of French organs. Around this time, American organists and organ music enthusiasts began to regard France as an important musical mecca due, in large part, to Alexandre Guilmant, who traveled to the U.S. in 1893 for a recital tour and later returned for two other recital tours: one in 1897-98 and then again in 1904. His first tour was in response to a request from Clarence Eddy, a prominent Chicago organist, to play at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. At the Exposition, Guilmant was the sole representative of the French organ school and after a successful series of performances, he returned to the U.S. on his second recital tour four years later. During this time, he played seventy-five programs in various U.S. cities and established the Guilmant Organ School in New

²⁴⁶ Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 77.

York City.²⁴⁷ Orpha Ochse is quick to point out that “Guilmant was the best of ambassadors, introducing Americans to a comprehensive cross section of the organ repertoire, attracting pupils and disciples, and building transatlantic bridges of friendship and collegiality. ... Guilmant’s generous encouragement of American organ builders and organists was a matter of significance. No European organist of his stature had come to the United States before, and the self-conscious, insecure American organ profession needed confidence as much as it needed guidance.”²⁴⁸ Americans, through embracing the French organ school tradition, found self-assurance and a stamp of authenticity. Guilmant, with his encouragement of American organs and organists along with his newly created school in New York City, also showed the American people that they could profit from France’s superior educational system. Ochse explains that “Deficiencies in American music education of the time were major handicaps when compared with the disciplined, thorough training required by French standards.”²⁴⁹ The French organ school, with its organized and rigorous education, offered an attractive alternative to American organists and many musicians were quick to make the most of these new opportunities to study in France.

Thus began a long-standing tradition of American organists journeying to France to study with their French colleagues. In 1895, the first of many American church music tour groups traveled to Paris. There, they explored the Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Trocadero “where M. Guilmant for over an hour disclosed to them the beauties, differences, resources and possibilities of the typical Cavaillé-Coll organ,” with the organ builder himself in the audience.²⁵⁰ In 1896, Clarence Eddy moved to Paris for ten years. He performed high-profile recitals there, served as a jury member for the Paris Conservatory organ competition, and supported the burgeoning

²⁴⁷ Ochse, *Organists*, 112.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

²⁴⁹ Ochse, Foreword to *Organ Loft Whisperings*, 13.

²⁵⁰ Fannie Edgar Thomas, “Musical Progress,” *Musical Courier* 31 no. 7 (August 24, 1895): 9.

American interest in all aspects of the French organ school.²⁵¹ Soon after, many more American organists began making the pilgrimage to France to study with the most renowned organ professors of the time—Guilmant, Widor, Vierne, and so on—continuing in a steady stream to the present day.

Widor himself, while writing specifically about the importance of studying Bach, mentioned the great number of foreign students who came to France to study organ. “It’s not without some chauvinistic pride ... [and] a little thrill of ironic contentment—let’s not let any of it show—that we see Americans, English, even Germans come here to study the art of the master of Eisenach. ... For ten or fifteen years, it is here that they come to perfect themselves and that they are little by little making the habit of pitching their tent without thinking of going farther. They now consider Paris as a musical last stop.”²⁵² This “musical last stop” was described in great detail by Fannie Edgar Thomas, an American music journalist. In 1893, at the end of Guilmant’s first American tour, Thomas, writing for the New York journal *The Musical Courier*, was sent to France to write regular columns for the paper, describing all facets of the Parisian music scene. The publishers of the weekly journal sent her over on the same ship as Guilmant so that she could provide a more exclusive piece on him for the interested American audience.²⁵³ Thomas then served as a musical correspondent from France for over seven years as she met, interviewed, and observed many of the most prominent French musicians of the time and she was highly regarded by the French government for her part in chronicling the French culture for the U.S. Fannie’s work in France attests to the great demand for and interest in all aspects of French music by their American colleagues and her work was described at the time as “a direct

²⁵¹ Ochse, *Organists*, 112.

²⁵² Widor, *Ménestrel* 65, no. 17 (April 23, 1899): 131-32, quoted in Near, *Widor*, 268.

²⁵³ Agnes Armstrong, Preface to *Organ Loft Whisperings*, 15.

result of the widespread agitation in organ and organist circles coming from the visit of Alexandre Guilmant to [the United States].”²⁵⁴ Many of these interested organists also came to France to study privately with Widor and the other French organists, which served to further sustain the American interest in all facets of the French organ culture.

Wallace Goodrich was one such American who made the pilgrimage to France to study organ with Widor in the mid-1890s. After his return to the U.S. around the turn of the century, he wrote a wonderfully descriptive book—still quite useful today—that presents the French organ school and the technologies of the instruments in great detail as he endeavored to inform American organists’ interpretations of French music. As he stated, “If we are to perform their works adequately, and thus enrich our repertoire by compositions of unquestioned authority and value, it is indispensable to their proper interpretation that the resources and characteristics of the instruments for which they were conceived be thoroughly understood by the executant.”²⁵⁵ Written while Widor was organist at Saint-Sulpice, this book gives a fascinating glimpse into the mind of an American organist who loved and appreciated French organs and the music for which they were designed. This deep attraction to French music, instruments, and culture has been and continues to be a hallmark of many American organists, resulting in the perpetuation of such traditions.

Although American interest in French organ music began to blossom in the 1890s, American musicians as early as the 1870s were already performing French Romantic organ music in America. Samuel P. Warren, close friend of Guilmant and son of the organ builder Samuel R. Warren, was instrumental in preparing an edition of Saint-Saëns’ organ music

²⁵⁴ Thomas, *Organ Loft Whisperings*, 21.

²⁵⁵ Goodrich, *Organ in France*, xii.

published by G. Schirmer in 1878. Even at this early date, he not only edited the music but also included registration indications for English and American organs.²⁵⁶ Later, he performed the majority of Widor's organ symphonies in a long-lasting series of organ concerts he began and performed at Grace Church in New York City.²⁵⁷ Along with Warren in New York, Clarence Eddy was a regular performer of Widor's symphonies in Chicago. Rollin Smith, in his brief article, "Widor in America," provides a fascinating look at the earliest performances of Widor's music in the United States in the late 1800s.²⁵⁸ In 1878 and 1879, Smith reports seven different public performances of movements or entire performances of Widor's first four organ symphonies, beginning only six years after the works were published. In the 1880s and 90s, that number grew and included Widor's next four symphonies in performances on both the east and west coasts as well as in Chicago and Cleveland. The *Gothique* was first performed in January of 1896, less than a year after Widor's own premiere of the work in France. The *Romane*, which has remained somewhat less played through the years, is not mentioned in Smith's article, but, in 1925, Albert Riemenschneider performed all ten of Widor's symphonies as a cycle.²⁵⁹ The number of organists performing Widor's music grew exponentially from just a few performers in the late 1870s to many more in the late 1880s through early 1890s and past the turn of the century, demonstrating the increasing interest in and growing popularity of Widor's organ music among American organists.

After World War I, it seems that American organists began to be less focused on French music. Eschbach suggests that "a lot of that has to do with the transcription mentality ... that just

²⁵⁶ Rollin Smith, *Saint-Saëns and the Organ* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1997), 164.

²⁵⁷ Rollin Smith, "Widor in America," *The American Organist* (May 2019), 80.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Near, "Charles-Marie Widor," 59.

swamped the repertory.”²⁶⁰ The *Orgelbewegung* movement was also a factor as many organists in the 1930s began turning away from the lush Romantic sounds of the French symphonic organ and towards a neo-Baroque ideal, leading to the revoicing of many American symphonic organs and a plethora of entirely new instruments in the style of Baroque-era German organ builders. Consequently, the French Romantic organ repertoire was often neglected in favor of music that better suited these organs.

After mid century, however, French organ music began to have somewhat of a revival in the United States—once again as a result of French organists giving concert tours. Performers such as André Isoir, Jeanne Demessieux, Jean Langlais, the Duruflés, Marie-Claire Alain, and others began to tour regularly in the United States. In the 1970s, twentieth-century French composers were favored and Widor’s music was often overlooked. When his music was played, it was often only a few representative pieces such as a movement or two from the fifth or sixth symphonies.²⁶¹ Gradually, both students and professors began to be more interested in playing entire Widor symphonies, such as Robert Glasgow’s performances of the *Romane* in the late 1970s and early 1980s.²⁶²

In more recent years, a greater awareness has grown of Widor’s life, his influence on all aspects of the French organ school, and his compositions. Although the Toccata from the Fifth Symphony has long been a cliché of organ music, recent research and recordings of Widor’s entire organ œuvre have brought somewhat more familiarity with his other compositions. John Near’s meticulous scholarly research has brought greater appreciation of this larger-than-life composer to English-speaking audiences while Ben van Oosten and Anne-Isabelle de Parcevaux

²⁶⁰ Eschbach, interview.

²⁶¹ George Baker, interview by the author, June 13, 2019, audio, 59:24, and Eschbach, interview.

²⁶² Eschbach, interview.

have given German and French readers, respectively, the ability to engage more closely with Widor's life and œuvre. Performers such as Daniel Roth, titular organist at Saint-Sulpice, and Michel Bouvard have also brought considerable attention to Widor's music. But it seems that foreign interest in Widor's music may have helped to create some of the renewed attention on the composer in his own country. Christophe Mantoux stated, "I probably discovered Widor thanks to the interest of foreign people, coming to me and asking for lessons. ... Ben van Oosten made the complete recording [of Widor's organ works] ... I don't know so many French people having made a complete recording of Widor. I don't know if there is even one."²⁶³ In regards to a renewed American interest in the composer, Jesse Eschbach adds that "several generations [of American organists] now have come back from France, trained in France and are more aware" of the French Romantic organ repertoire and of Widor's music in particular.²⁶⁴ The composer's "austere" music will most likely never attain the popularity of the twentieth-century French organists, many of whom Widor taught. But in the last fifty years, organists have slowly begun to explore more works of this important composer and many scholars have remarked that Widor's works do indeed deserve more scholarly attention, especially his last symphony for organ, the *Symphonie Romane*.

²⁶³ Mantoux, interview.

²⁶⁴ Eschbach, interview.

CONCLUSION

Although the organ at Saint-Sernin did undergo a few small modifications over the years, it escaped the brutal organ reform movement of the mid-twentieth century for the most part and has remained exceptionally unmodified when compared to the majority of French Romantic instruments, many of which were heavily and irreparably altered to reflect changing fashions in organ building during the neo-baroque reforms. Therefore, a performance of any of Widor's organ music—or that of his French colleagues—on the Saint-Sernin organ most likely comes closer to the sounds Widor would have experienced than a performance of his music on many of the other existing Cavaillé-Coll instruments, with the exception of the Saint-Sulpice organ over which Widor presided for six decades. This fact alone may constitute one of the primary reasons the tradition of performing the *Romane* at Saint-Sernin developed. As Hobsbawm remarks, “Inventing traditions ... is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition.”²⁶⁵ Both the recordings made at Saint-Sernin (formalization) and the performance of the work (ritualization) specifically at the Basilica create the invented tradition which ties the music directly to the organ and the space. There is certainly nothing inherently wrong with performing or recording the *Romane* at Saint-Sernin. But an understanding of where and how the tradition began allows the modern-day performer to more clearly realize how traditions can subtly influence one's own understanding of a composition.

²⁶⁵ Hobsbawm, *Invention of Tradition*, 4.

The tradition of performing Widor's *Symphonie Romane* on the Cavaillé-Coll instrument at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin will most likely continue for many years to come. It does indeed provide a wonderful opportunity to examine how Widor's compositional style is so closely linked to the splendid Cavaillé-Coll organs, although a similar study could be made on a number of other Cavaillé-Coll instruments. However, the question still remains as to whether or not a performance in Saint-Sernin comes closest to what Widor desired to evoke in the music. Perhaps Widor did write the work as a way to musically evoke the world of the Saint-Sernin Basilica. The fact that Widor did not premiere the work there but instead in a different Romanesque-style church seems to indicate that the work does not need to be placed specifically in the Toulouse church simply because of the dedication. Furthermore, while it is difficult to say precisely that the music paints a picture of the architecture of the Basilica, the symphony does clearly convey a compelling sense of sacredness, an aspect that Widor clearly intended it to have. Performers should consider focusing on the sacred aspect of the music, rather than viewing the *Romane* as "belonging" to a particular space.

Perhaps the music serves as a memorial to the saint, evoking the magnificent Romanesque Basilica named after him and the imposing sounds of the Cavaillé-Coll organ in the church. One can understand how a performance of the music in the space would allow the audience to appreciate the Romanesque aesthetic: hearing the soaring lines and the swirling figures of the music while simultaneously viewing the Romanesque architecture does create a wonderful sensory experience. But as performers, do we have the right to say that such a performance would have been exactly the performance Widor desired, a claim that seems to be implicit in the contemporary performance culture of the piece? Does playing the work at Saint-Sernin become a self-serving act of each musician who comes to Toulouse to experience the

Symphonie Romane as it was “supposed” to be played? As mentioned earlier, perhaps such an act is a holdover from the end of the nineteenth century when the American organ school was still in its infancy and was looking for confirmation from the established French organ school. When the listener cannot simultaneously experience the beauty of the 800-year-old church, can a recording of the piece in the Basilica somehow mystically create a more authentic experience? If the *Symphonie Romane* had been written explicitly to be performed at Saint-Sernin, then a performance elsewhere could be considered less valid or perhaps lacking in some respect. Rather than focusing on the music in the context of the Basilica and the specific organ there, musicians may be better served by examining the symphony in a broader light, allowing performers and audiences alike to view the music as a work of sacred art. Other musical works may benefit from similar research, allowing musicians to have a more nuanced understanding of the works they perform and how the music itself relates to the instruments of the time.

When we view the *Romane* through the lens of “sacred art,” it allows us to engage with the work in other ways. Performers, particularly those who have experienced it at the Basilica of Saint-Sernin, can play the work on other instruments, focusing on creating a performance that is musically appealing. Taruskin discusses this idea in regard to early instruments, although in the context of a *Romane* performance, it equally applies to newer, non-Cavaillé-Coll organs. “The unfamiliarity of the instrument forces mind, hand, and ear out of their familiar routines and into more direct confrontation with the music. ... The presentation of a familiar object (the music) in an unfamiliar context (the instrument and the new problems it poses) forces one to see it freshly, more immediately, more observantly—in a word, more authentically.”²⁶⁶ As a performer, I experienced this when playing the *Romane* on an American instrument shortly after my return

²⁶⁶ Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 79.

from my studies in France. The sound I had in my ear was not translating well to the instrument but in my efforts to create a registration, I found myself listening to the music in a different way, hearing phrases as I had not heard them before. Because of this experience, I began to view the piece in a more nuanced light, no longer needing to be so physically tied to the French church. When we view the work as “sacred art,” the music is thus able to “live” anywhere, creating performances that are just as valid as a performance at the Saint-Sernin Basilica.

Several avenues of exploration into this topic still remain to be studied and could provide additional insights on the work. One such area is that of the architecture of the churches and any associated French literature: is it possible that at the time of Widor, French people viewed the Basilica of Saint-Sernin and the Abbatale of Saint-Ouen as having some sort of connection to each other? Widor was extremely well-educated in many areas not relating to music and it may be that after dedicating the *Symphonie Gothique* to Saint-Ouen, it may have been a logical step to dedicate a symphony to Saint-Sernin.²⁶⁷ But why not to Saint-Sulpice or even Notre-Dame? Was it simply because of the Cavaillé-Coll instruments in Saint-Ouen and Saint-Sernin, which have been described as the organ builder’s “last two masterpieces”?²⁶⁸ A study of architectural literature and contemporary views regarding any links between Saint-Ouen and Saint-Sernin may elucidate this point.

Although it was unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis, a study trip back to Toulouse to examine the church archives may provide additional information on live performances of the *Symphonie Romane* and the performance tradition that has grown up in that

²⁶⁷ Esbach, interview.

²⁶⁸ Pierre Vallotton, *Emile Rupp et Albert Schweitzer témoins de leur époque, réformateurs et prophètes de l’orgue*, in “La réforme alsacienne de l’orgue inspirée par Emile Rupp et Albert Schweitzer,” *L’Orgue francophone – cahiers hors série no. 3*, Symposium of July 14, 1990, 21, in Roth and Dub-Attenti, *The Neoclassical Organ*, 24; Pierre Pincemaille, quoted in Will Fraser, “Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (1811-1899), Genius at Saint-Denis: an artist ahead of the music of his time,” *The Organ* 362 (Autumn 2012): 28.

location. Widor's stance on nationalism in music and the German connection between Widor and Reimann also leaves room for further study, as does the question of how Widor came to perform at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin in 1900. A look at the historical contexts surrounding Widor's organ performances in Germany and an inquiry into why the *Gothique* was published in Germany may also produce further insight on his relationship with the German organ tradition.

Widor was one of the first musicians who truly understood and exploited the revolutionary advances in organ building made by Cavaillé-Coll. Inspired by the Saint-Sulpice organ, he was at the forefront of a movement that sought to create organ music that equaled the formidable instruments. As a seminal figure in the French Romantic organ school, Widor developed the new genre of the organ symphony, a genre further expanded by his pupils. Aristide Cavaillé-Coll died on October 13, 1899, not quite three months after the *Romane* had already been completed and four years after the *Gothique*, and as John Near states, "The dedications on these last two symphonies must be viewed, at least in part, as veiled homages to the builder of the magnificent instruments that provided Widor so much inspiration."²⁶⁹ But more important than an homage to Cavaillé-Coll's innovative and forward-looking instruments is the idea of the sacred nature of the piece, created in part through the use of Gregorian chant. Widor was highly influential to many later organ composers and thus became the progenitor of a large body of modern organ music based on liturgical chant themes.

In an oft-repeated quote, Albert Schweitzer describes the first time he heard the work: "the tenth (*Symphonie Romane*), on the wonderful motif of the 'Haec dies,' is conceived as an Easter symphony. And when one May Sunday, still striving with technical problems, he played

²⁶⁹ Near, "Charles-Marie Widor," 54.

for the first time in St. Sulpice the *Symphonie Romane*, I felt with him that in this work the French art of organ playing had entered sacred art, and had experienced that death and resurrection that every art of organ playing must experience when it wishes to create something enduring.”²⁷⁰ Through his life’s work, Widor exemplifies the resurrection of the French art of organ playing. Although the *Symphonie Romane* will never be as popular as the familiar Fifth Symphony Toccata, Widor’s tenth and final symphony for organ has indeed proved to be enduring: a monumental piece of sacred art.

²⁷⁰ Joy, *Music in the Life*, 174.

APPENDIX 1

STOPLISTS

Basilique Saint-Sernin, Toulouse²⁷¹
03.04.1889

I. Grand-Orgue *56 notes*

Jeux de fonds

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| 1. Montre | 16' |
| 2. Bourdon | 16' |
| 3. Montre | 8' |
| 4. Bourdon | 8' |
| 5. Flûte Harmonique..... | 8' |
| 6. Salicional | 8' |
| 7. Viole de Gambe..... | 8' |
| 8. Prestant | 4' |
| 9. Flûte Octavante | 4' |

Jeux de combinaison

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| 10. Quinte | 2 2/3' |
| 11. Doublette..... | 2' |
| 12. Fourniture..... | V |
| 13. Cymbale..... | IV |
| 14. Grand Cornet..... | V |
| 15. Bombarde..... | 16' |
| 16. Trompette..... | 8' |
| 17. Clairon | 4' |
| 18. Clairon-Doublette..... | 2' |
| 19. *Trompette Harmonique..... | 8' |
| 20. *Clairon Harmonique | 4' |

* En Chamade

II. Positif *56 notes*

Jeux de fonds

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| 1. Montre..... | 8' |
| 2. Cor de Nuit..... | 8' |
| 3. Salicional..... | 8' |
| 4. Unda Maris..... | 8' |
| 5. Prestant..... | 4' |
| 6. Flûte Douce | 4' |
| 7. Carillon | III |

Jeux de combinaison

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| 8. Trompette..... | 8' |
| 9. Basson et Hautbois | 8' |
| 10. Clairon | 4' |

²⁷¹ Jesse Eschbach, *Aristide Cavaillé-Coll: aspects of his life and work = aspects de son vie et de son œuvre = Aspekte zu Leben und Werk* (Paderborn: Verlag Peter Ewers, 2003), 528-29.

III. Récit-Expressif
56 notes

Jeux de fonds

1. Quintaton 16'
2. Diapason 8'
3. Flûte Harmonique..... 8'
4. Viole de Gambe..... 8'
5. Voix Céleste..... 8'
6. Flûte Octavante 4'
7. Octavin..... 2'
8. Basson et Hautbois 8'
9. Voix Humaine 8'

Jeux de combinaison

10. Cornet V
11. Bombarde..... 16'
12. Trompette Harmonique..... 8'
13. Clarinette..... 8'
14. Clairon Harmonique 4'

Pédale
30 notes

Jeux de fonds

1. Flûte Ouverte..... 16'
2. Soubasse..... 16'
3. Quinte..... 10 2/3'
4. Flûte 8'
5. Violoncelle 8'
6. Flûte 4'

Jeux de combinaison

7. Contre Bombarde..... 32'
8. Bombarde..... 16'
9. Trompette..... 8'
10. Clairon 4'

Boutons de Registre

1. Copula Positif à l'Unisson
2. Positif Octaves Graves

Pédales de Combinaison

(In order from left to right)

1. Effets d'Orage
2. Octaves Aiguës Pédale
3. Tirasse Grand-Orgue
4. Tirasse Positif
5. Tirasse Récit
6. Anches Pédale
7. Anches Grand-Orgue
8. Anches Positif
9. Anches Récit
10. Appel Chamades

11. Expression du Récit

12. Trémolo du Récit
13. Octaves Graves Grand-Orgue
14. Grand-Orgue sur Machine
15. Copula Positif sur Grand-Orgue
16. Copula Récit sur Grand-Orgue
17. Copula Positif sur Récit
18. Octaves Graves Récit
19. Copula Récit à l'Unisson

Église Saint-Sulpice, Paris²⁷²
29.04.1862

I/II. Grand-Orgue
56 notes

Jeux de fonds

21. Principal Harmonique.....	16'
22. Montre	16'
23. Bourdon	16'
24. Flûte Conique.....	16'
25. Montre	8'
26. Diapason	8'
27. Bourdon	8'
28. Flûte Harmonique.....	8'
29. Flûte Traversière	8'
30. Flûte à Pavillon	8'
31. Grosse Quinte.....	5 1/3'
32. Prestant	4'
33. Doublette.....	2'

I/II. Grand-Chœur
56 notes

Jeux de combinaison

34. Salicional	8'
35. Octave	4'
36. Grosse Fourniture.....	IV
37. Plein-Jeu	IV
38. Grosse Cymbale	VI
39. Cornet	V
40. Bombarde.....	16'
41. Basson.....	16'
42. 1 ^{ière} Trompette.....	8'
43. 2 ^e Trompette.....	8'
44. Basson.....	8'
45. Clairon	4'
46. Clairon Doublette	2'

III. Bombarde
56 notes

Jeux de fonds

1. Soubasse.....	16'
2. Flûte Conique	16'
3. Principal	8'
4. Bourdon.....	8'
5. Flûte Harmonique.....	8'
6. Viole de Gambe.....	8'
7. Violoncelle	8'
8. Kéraulophone	8'
9. Prestant.....	4'
10. Flûte Octavante	4'

Jeux de combinaison

11. Grosse Quinte.....	5 1/3'
12. Octave	4'
13. Grosse Tierce.....	3 1/5'
14. Quinte.....	2 2/3'
15. Octavin.....	2'
16. Cornet.....	V
17. Bombarde.....	16'
18. Trompette.....	8'
19. Baryton.....	8'
20. Clairon	4'

²⁷² Ibid., 210-11.

IV. Positif
56 notes

Jeux de fonds

11. Violonbasse.....	16'
12. Quintaton	16'
13. Quintaton	8'
14. Flûte Traversière	8'
15. Salicional	8'
16. Viole de Gambe.....	8'
17. Unda Maris.....	8'
18. Flûte Douce.....	4'
19. Flûte Octavante	4'
20. Dulciane.....	4'

Jeux de combinaison

21. Quinte	2 2/3'
22. Doublette.....	2'
23. Tierce	1 3/5'
24. Larigot	1 1/3'
25. Picolo	1'
26. Plein-Jeu Harmonique	III-VI
27. Euphone	16'
28. Trompette.....	8'
29. Clarinette.....	8'
30. Clairon	4'

V. Récit-Expressif
56 notes

Jeux de fonds

15. Quintaton.....	16'
16. Bourdon.....	8'
17. Voix Céleste	8'
18. Prestant.....	4'
19. Doublette.....	2'
20. Fourniture.....	IV
21. Cymbale	V
22. Cor Anglais	16'
23. Basson et Hautbois	8'
24. Cromorne	8'
25. Voix Humaine	8'

Jeux de combinaison

26. Violoncelle	8'
27. Flûte Harmonique.....	8'
28. Flûte Octavante	4'
29. Dulciane	4'
30. Nazard	2 2/3'
31. Octavin.....	2'
32. Cornet.....	V
33. Bombarde	16'
34. Trompette.....	8'
35. Trompette à Forte Pression ...	8'
36. Clairon	4'

Pédale
30 notes

Jeux de fonds

11. Principal Basse	32'
12. Contrebasse	16'
13. Soubasse	16'
14. Flûte	8'
15. Violoncelle	8'
16. Flûte	4'

Jeux de combinaison

17. Contre Bombarde	32'
18. Bombarde	16'
19. Basson	16'
20. Trompette	8'
21. Ophicléide	8'
22. Clairon	4'

Pédales de Combinaison
(In order from left to right)

1. Effets d'Orage
2. Tirasse Grand-Chœur
3. Tirasse Grand-Orgue
4. Anches Pédale
Octaves Graves des Claviers
5. Grand-Chœur
6. Grand-Orgue
7. Bombarde
8. Positif
9. Récit
Appel des Jeux de Combinaison
10. Grand-Orgue
11. Bombarde
12. Positif
13. Récit
Accouplements au Premier Clavier
14. Grand-Chœur
15. Grand-Orgue
16. Bombarde
17. Positif
18. Récit
19. Trémolo du Récit
20. Expression du Récit

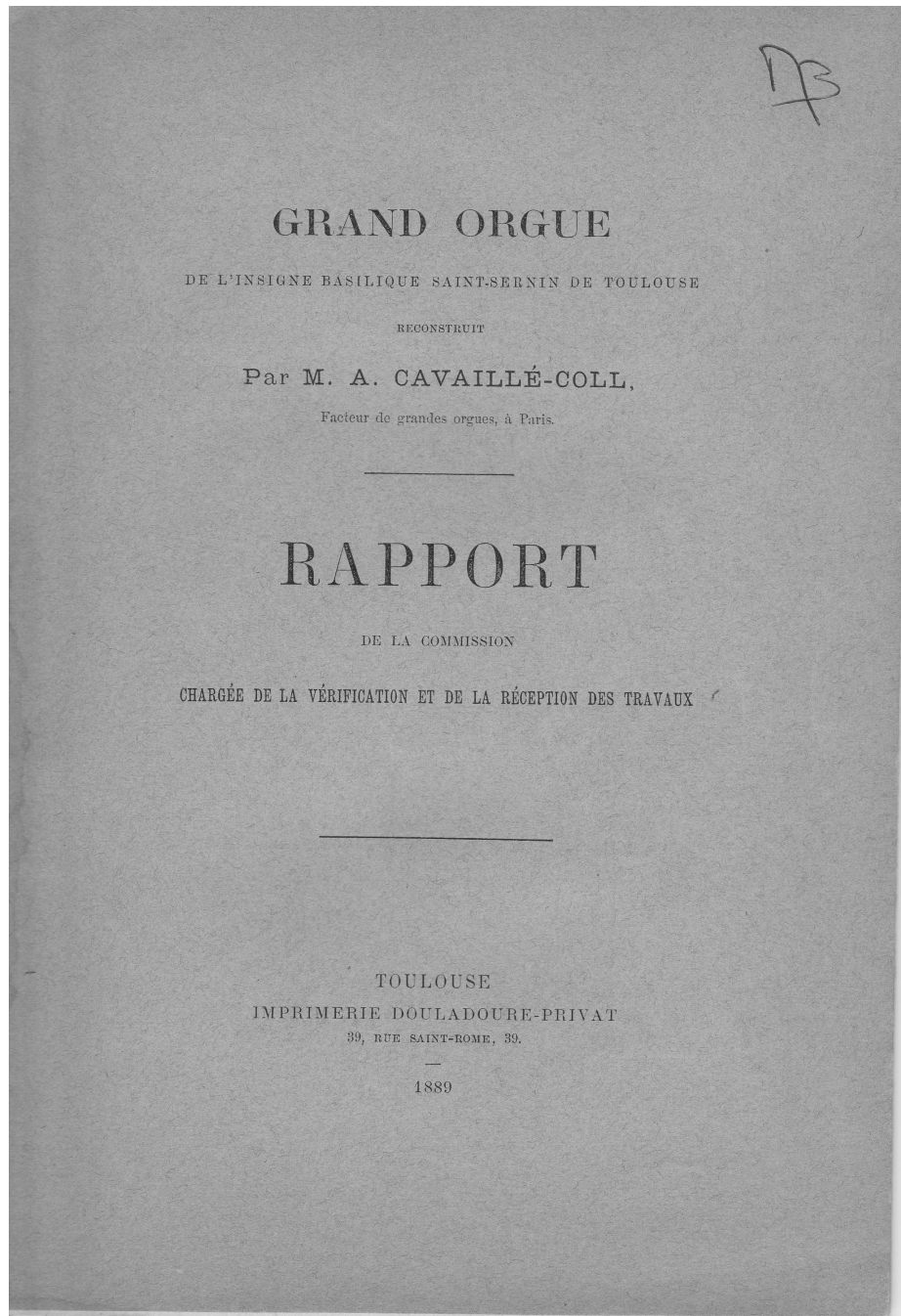
Registres de Combinaison

(Duplicate sets on left and right, third terrace of stop jambs)

1. Pédale
2. Grand-Orgue et Grand-Chœur
3. Bombarde
4. Positif
5. Récit

APPENDIX 2

RAPPORT DE LA COMMISSION



GRAND ORGUE

DE L'INSIGNE BASILIQUE SAINT-SERNIN DE TOULOUSE

RECONSTRUIT

Par M. A. CAVAILLÉ-COLL,

Facteur de grandes orgues, à Paris.

RAPPORT

DE LA COMMISSION

CHARGÉE DE LA VÉRIFICATION ET DE LA RÉCEPTION DES TRAVAUX

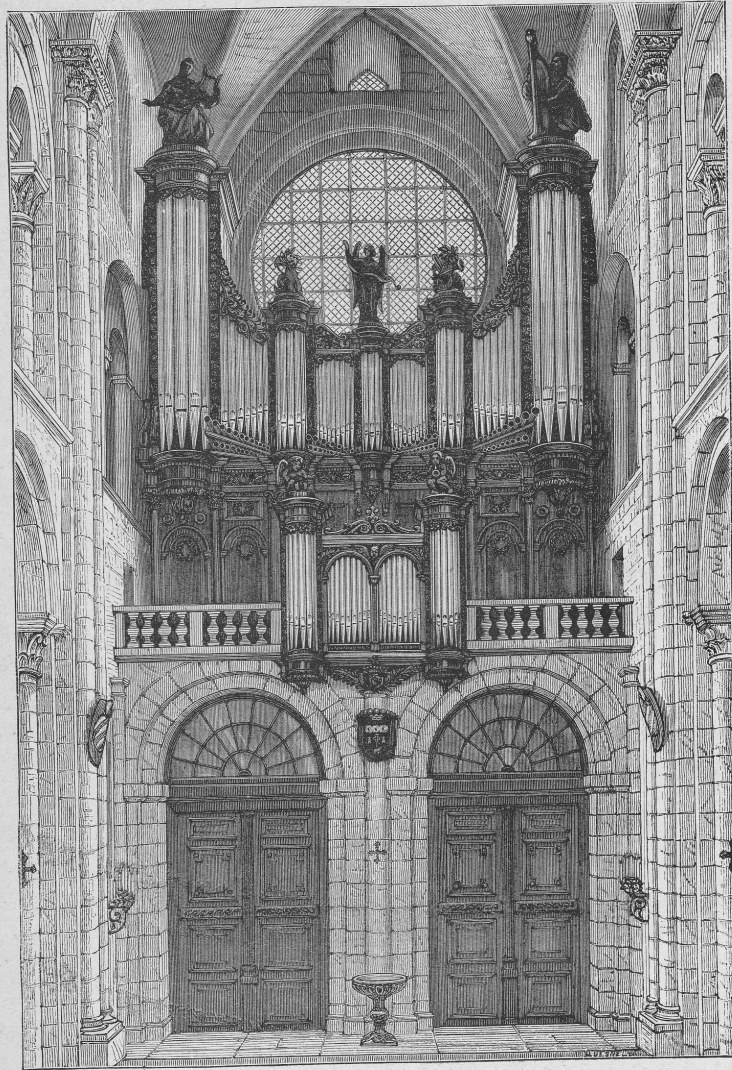
TOULOUSE

IMPRIMERIE DOULADOURE-PRIVAT

39, RUE SAINT-ROME, 39.

—
1889

GRAND ORGUE DE L'INSIGNE BASILIQUE SAINT-SERNIN DE TOULOUSE



Dessin de M. DAVID.

D'après la photographie de M. le chanoine MOCLINS.

RAPPORT

ADRESSÉ

A MESSIEURS LES MEMBRES DU CONSEIL DE FABRIQUE

PAR LA COMMISSION

Chargée de la vérification et de la réception des travaux.

MESSIEURS,

La Commission que vous avez nommée pour vérifier le grand orgue de la basilique Saint-Sernin, de Toulouse, dont la reconstruction vient d'être achevée par M. Aristide Cavallé-Coll, facteur de grandes orgues, à Paris, s'est réunie les 1, 2 et 3 avril 1889, dans cette basilique, pour procéder à l'exécution du mandat que vous lui avez confié.

Cette Commission était composée de :

MM. **Ed.-A. LEGOUX**, professeur de mécanique rationnelle et doyen de la Faculté des sciences ;

Alex. GUILMANT, organiste de la Trinité et de la Société des concerts du Conservatoire de Paris, membre du collège des organistes de Londres ;

L. DEFFÈS, directeur du Conservatoire de musique ;

J. LEYBACH, organiste de la métropole ;

A. KUNC, professeur au Conservatoire, maître de chapelle à la métropole ;

O. GUIRAUD, professeur au Conservatoire, organiste de la basilique Saint-Sernin ;

Th. DUTREY, maître de chapelle à la basilique Saint-Sernin, professeur suppléant au Conservatoire ;

H. BACH, architecte, professeur d'architecture à l'École des beaux-arts ;

P. LAPEYRE, publiciste, ancien rédacteur de l'*Univers* ;

F. TORTAT, commandant en retraite, président de la fabrique de Saint-Sernin ;

J. ESQUIROL, avocat, trésorier de la fabrique de Saint-Sernin ;

V. DOUZON, ingénieur civil, membre de la fabrique de Saint-Sernin ;

J.-B. COURRÈGES, architecte de la Compagnie des chemins de fer du Midi, membre de la fabrique de Saint-Sernin.

Avant de procéder aux diverses opérations dont elle avait à s'occuper, la Commission a choisi M. Legoux pour son président et M. Courrèges pour son secrétaire rapporteur.

Cette formalité une fois remplie, elle s'est transportée à la tribune de l'orgue, où, avant tout examen de l'instrument, elle a entendu la lecture du devis, en date du 8 avril 1887, dans lequel ont été consignées toutes les obligations auxquelles le facteur s'était engagé à se soumettre par son marché

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du même jour. Elle a ensuite examiné une à une toutes les parties matérielles et mécaniques dudit instrument, afin de s'assurer de leur exacte conformité avec les clauses du devis et pour constater, en même temps, les améliorations et additions introduites en cours d'exécution, dans ce devis, sur l'initiative du facteur et sans qu'il y fût obligé.

Dans la séance suivante, du 2 avril, la Commission a poursuivi ses opérations en s'occupant particulièrement de tout ce qui se rapportait à la partie sonore de l'orgue. Après avoir fait, devis en mains, toutes les constatations et observations nécessaires, elle a entendu et apprécié séparément, puis ensemble, les différents jeux.

Enfin, dans la séance du 3 avril, jour de l'inauguration, elle s'est spécialement attachée à apprécier les effets de la sonorité, en tenant compte de la foule qui remplissait la basilique, et dont la présence devait nécessairement exercer sur cette sonorité une influence sensible, en modifiant les conditions acoustiques du vaisseau.

Pour mettre de l'ordre dans l'exposé détaillé des travaux de la Commission, nous en classerons la matière sous les titres suivants :

- 1^o *Conformité des travaux du grand orgue avec les conditions du devis et additions faites à ce devis;*
- 2^o *Appréciation des conditions mécaniques et matérielles de toutes les parties de l'instrument;*
- 3^o *Appréciation de tout ce qui se rapporte à la sonorité;*
- 4^o *Résumé et conclusion;*
- 5^o *Restauration de l'orgue d'accompagnement.*

*

**I. — Conformité des travaux du grand orgue
avec les conditions du devis et additions
faites à ce devis.**

Dans l'examen approfondi que la Commission a fait de l'ossature, ainsi que de tous les organes mécaniques et acoustiques de ce vaste instrument, elle a constaté partout, non seulement la scrupuleuse observation, par le facteur, de toutes les clauses et conditions qui lui étaient imposées par son devis, mais aussi une recherche et une application particulières, soit dans le choix des matières employées, soit dans les façons de leur mise en œuvre, qui justifient la grande réputation d'habileté supérieure et de parfaite honorabilité que ce facteur s'est acquise par ses belles œuvres antérieures.

Elle a constaté, en outre, qu'indépendamment des obligations strictes auxquelles il était tenu, M. Cavaillé-Coll a apporté de son plein gré, à l'instrument dont il s'agit, des additions et des modifications importantes, qui, sans être absolument indispensables, en ont toutefois notablement augmenté les ressources harmoniques ainsi que la valeur vénale. Ces additions et modifications sont les suivantes, savoir :

AU GRAND ORGUE.

Le jeu de *clarinette*, prévu sur ce clavier, a été transporté au Récit afin qu'il pût être joué avec expression; ce jeu a été remplacé, au Grand-Orgue, par un jeu nouveau de *clairon-doublette*, destiné à donner de la clarté aux basses, à ren-

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forcer les dessus des jeux d'anche et à fournir ainsi plus de brillant au grand chœur.

Deux jeux de *trompette* et de *clairon harmoniques* (ce dernier sans reprise) ont été ajoutés à ce clavier et placés en chamade afin de donner une très grande puissance au grand chœur.

AU RÉCIT.

Le jeu de *clarinette*, transporté du Grand-Orgue sur ce clavier, a nécessité l'addition, au sommier, d'une nouvelle chape avec son registre.

Les anciens jeux de *voix humaine* et de *diapason* huit pieds, qui devaient être simplement réparés et complétés, ont été remplacés par deux jeux de même nature entièrement neufs.

La *bombarde* seize pieds, qui, d'après le devis, devait avoir l'entière octave basse acoustique, ne comporte, en réalité, que sept notes, dont les corps sonores n'ont pas une hauteur qui corresponde exactement à celle d'intonation de l'anche.

A LA PÉDALE.

Tous les jeux d'anche ont été groupés sur le sommier spécial de la bombarde trente-deux pieds, ce qui a nécessité l'élargissement de ce sommier et l'addition de deux nouveaux registres avec leurs accessoires. Cette modification a permis de transformer les autres sommiers pour les consacrer à l'alimentation exclusive des jeux de fond de ce clavier.

En résumé, il a été ajouté aux claviers : trois jeux neufs supplémentaires avec leurs chapes, registres et mécanismes spéciaux, et deux autres jeux neufs, en remplacement de deux anciens jeux irréparables.

A LA PARTIE MÉCANIQUE

il a été ajouté :

Deux appareils pneumatiques à double effet, pour actionner les registres des jeux en chamade, ainsi que les pédales de combinaisons suivantes :

- 1° *Octaves aiguës de la pédale;*
- 2° *Appel des jeux d'anche en chamade;*
- 3° *Copula du récit à l'unisson;*
- 4° *Copula du positif à l'unisson.*

La pédale n° 9 du devis, qui devait appeler les jeux d'anche prévus sur le sommier des jeux de fond, a été supprimée par suite du transfert des premiers sur le sommier agrandi des trente-deux pieds d'anche.

II. — **Appréciation des conditions mécaniques et matérielles du grand orgue.**

Après avoir fait connaître d'une manière générale la louable exactitude du facteur à se conformer aux prescriptions du devis, tout en y apportant les additions et les améliorations convenables plus haut énumérées, nous allons

rendre connus les règlements par la part

Placée à tout l'orgue, la Ciments con du juste l'instrument

Elle a r était doub a employé servoirs, c Toutes les conçues et préparés à l'emploi longs res gemment larité par parties de graduées

Les huit fleurs, su vingt-cin peuvent c aux seize l'orgue.

Il n'a é ni dans l

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rendre compte, en détail, des soins et de l'habileté peu ordinaires avec lesquels les diverses conditions de ce devis et les règles de l'art ont été observées. Nous commencerons par la partie mécanique.

action-
nédales

Placée en face de la soufflerie, qui est comme l'âme de tout l'orgue et de laquelle dépend la bonne qualité des jeux, la Commission s'est attachée à en analyser les éléments constitutifs; à s'assurer de leur bon fonctionnement, du juste rapport de cette soufflerie avec l'importance de l'instrument et de l'efficacité de ses effets.

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Elle a remarqué, tout d'abord, que cette grande soufflerie était double, à deux pressions initiales différentes, et qu'on y a employé du bois de chêne du Nord pour les soufflets et réservoirs, et du sapin d'Amérique (dit Pich-pin) pour le bâtis. Toutes les parties de cette soufflerie lui ont paru avoir été bien conçues et exécutées avec des matériaux de première qualité, préparés et assemblés avec une grande précision. Grâce à l'emploi de parallélismes en fer, de plaques de fonte, de longs ressorts en acier et de soufflets antiseousses intelligemment répartis, cette soufflerie fonctionne avec une régularité parfaite, produisant et distribuant aux différentes parties de l'orgue un air comprimé à diverses pressions, graduées suivant les besoins des différents jeux.

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Les huit pompes cunéiformes, actionnées par quatre souffleurs, suffisent pour produire dans le court intervalle de vingt-cinq secondes, les dix mille litres d'air environ que peuvent contenir les grands réservoirs alimentaires réunis aux seize réservoirs régulateurs placés dans l'intérieur de l'orgue.

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Il n'a été possible de surprendre la moindre fuite de vent, ni dans les réservoirs, ni dans les porte-vent, soit pendant

leur alimentation directe, soit pendant le temps que les réservoirs alimentaires, abandonnés à eux-mêmes, ont mis à se vider; ce temps a été de huit minutes pour la forte pression, et de dix minutes pour la faible pression.

Pendant la tenue d'un accord de tous les jeux avec tous les claviers accouplés à celui du grand orgue (moins l'accouplement des octaves graves), les mêmes réservoirs, livrés à eux-mêmes, ont mis trente secondes pour se vider.

De ces expériences, il est résulté clairement que cette soufflerie suffisait largement à l'abondante et régulière alimentation de tout l'instrument.

La constance, dans la pression de l'air comprimé qui alimente les jeux, étant une condition essentielle, à laquelle leur bonne qualité est subordonnée, la Commission a voulu s'assurer si cette condition se trouvait réalisée. A cet effet, un manomètre à eau (appelé anémomètre par les facteurs) ayant été placé sur les sommiers, on a fait parler tous les tuyaux correspondant à une même gravure; pendant cette expérience, la colonne d'eau du manomètre n'ayant subi que des oscillations insignifiantes, on a dû en déduire que la pression de l'air pouvait être considérée comme constante. D'où il suit, que l'air comprimé arrivant dans les sommiers d'une manière abondante, régulière et sous des pressions invariables, il y avait lieu d'en conclure, que la soufflerie était établie dans les conditions les meilleures pour remplir efficacement son objet.

Après la soufflerie et ses annexes, la Commission a reporté son attention sur tout le mécanisme intérieur de l'orgue. Ce qui l'a frappée, au premier aspect, c'est l'artistique et savante distribution de cette foule d'organes dont se compose cette machine compliquée. Tous ces organes

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sont réunis par groupes, disposés et répartis suivant une ordonnance claire et méthodique dont l'effet d'ensemble est des plus satisfaisants ; entre ces différents groupes ont été ménagés des espaces libres, permettant d'accéder facilement à tous les appareils, de façon à pouvoir les démonter sans difficulté et les réparer au besoin. Ni désordre, ni gêne, ni embarras ne se font sentir nulle part, et l'on peut aisément circuler partout à travers ces multiples mécanismes, de toute forme et de toute grandeur.

Passant à l'examen détaillé de chacun de ces mécanismes, la Commission a remarqué qu'ils avaient été conçus et exécutés suivant une parfaite entente des lois de la mécanique, avec des matériaux de premier choix, et une précision qui ne laissait rien à désirer ; les transformations de mouvement, notamment, y sont réalisées par les procédés les plus simples, les plus ingénieux et les plus rationnels ; les pédales, les tirages et les autres mouvements agissent avec douceur et prestesse, sans le moindre jeu et sans bruit.

Les tables des sommiers et les registres ont été trouvés parfaitement étanches ; il a été constaté, en effet, qu'en tenant toutes les touches des claviers abaissées (les registres étant fermés), aucun bruissement ne se faisait entendre.

Les touches de tous les claviers se meuvent avec facilité, sans bruit, et n'opposent pas plus de résistance que celles du plus souple clavier de piano, alors même qu'on réunit tous les accouplements, grâce à l'action efficace des trois machines à leviers pneumatiques ; ces machines elles-mêmes ont leurs petits moteurs si bien établis, qu'ils transmettent la traction des vergettes aux soupapes correspondantes des sommiers avec une précision surprenante.

Les accouplements des claviers et les autres effets méca-

niques, régis par les vingt et une pédales ou boutons d'accouplement et de combinaison, se produisent avec une facilité et une promptitude qui ont été remarquées. Les immenses ressources offertes par ces groupements facultatifs des claviers et des registres, venant s'ajouter à celles résultant des nombreux mélanges que l'on peut obtenir à l'aide de différents registres, joués séparément ou combinés entre eux, donnent à l'orgue de Saint-Sernin une très grande puissance unie à beaucoup de souplesse, et permettent de varier à l'infini les effets des cinquante-quatre jeux qu'il renferme; cette puissance, grâce à l'action combinée des accouplements et de la boîte expressive du Récit, dont le fonctionnement est parfait, peut s'élever rapidement, et par degrés insensibles, d'un *pianissimo* à peine perceptible, à un *forte* général d'une intensité considérable, et *vice versa*.

Parmi ces accouplements, il en est qui, par la nouveauté de leur disposition et de leurs effets, ont particulièrement attiré l'attention de la Commission : ce sont, notamment, ceux d'unissons et d'octaves graves du Grand-Orgue et du Récit, dont la position, sur les machines pneumatiques, permet pour chaque clavier de faire entendre à volonté, sur une seule et même touche, soit la note de chaque jeu qui correspond normalement à cette touche, soit l'octave grave de cette note, soit enfin la note et son octave grave simultanément.

Un effet semblable peut être obtenu sur le clavier du Positif, au moyen d'une autre combinaison mécanique, lorsque ce clavier se trouve réuni à celui du Grand-Orgue ou à celui du Récit; cette disposition permet ainsi de faire parler l'octave grave seize pieds du Positif par l'un ou

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l'autre des claviers précités, tout en n'ayant qu'un huit pieds sur ce Positif.

Le nouvel accouplement de l'octave aiguë du clavier des pédales qui, comme l'indique sa dénomination, sert à doubler de leur octave aiguë toutes les notes touchées, de l'*ut* grave au deuxième *fa* du Pédalier, forme, avec les deux accouplements unissons du Positif et du Récit, un très heureux complément de la série des autres accouplements, prévus au devis. Ces additions constituent, en définitive, des ressources nouvelles, très avantageuses, qui ont été fort goûtées par la Commission.

En résumé, toute la partie matérielle et mécanique de l'orgue a paru, à la Commission, aussi supérieurement conçue qu'irréprochablement exécutée, et l'investigation la plus minutieuse ne lui a pas permis d'y découvrir le moindre défaut.

III. — **Appréciation de tout ce qui se rapporte à la sonorité.**

La partie sonore de cet instrument a semblé, à la Commission, aussi remarquable et aussi savamment établie que la partie mécanique.

A Saint-Sernin, où les conditions acoustiques ont toujours été jugées très défavorables à la sonorité de l'orgue, le problème à résoudre présentait, au point de vue harmonique, de très sérieuses difficultés.

Aussi est-ce avec satisfaction que la Commission a constaté l'habileté avec laquelle M. Cavaillé-Coll a su en triompher.

Tous les sommiers et les jeux qu'ils supportent ont été disposés avec un art et un soin particuliers pour donner aux ondes sonores toute facilité de se propager librement et directement vers le haut des nefs.

Les anciens jeux conservés ont été repoussés afin d'en augmenter la taille et, conséquemment, la puissance sonore ; ils ont été soumis, en outre, à de telles modifications pour élever cette puissance à son maximum, et améliorer, en même temps, leurs qualités harmoniques, que ces changements équivalent à une véritable création.

Les jeux neufs ont été faits de grosse taille, sauf ceux dont le timbre caractéristique exige un moindre volume de son ; les jeux de métal ont été bien étoffés ; tous les jeux de bois, anciens et nouveaux, ont reçu à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur une couche de peinture à l'huile et colle forte suivie d'une application de vernis, ce qui donne de la consistance au bois et facilite le mouvement des ondes sonores.

Tous les jeux ont été essayés chacun en particulier, tuyau à tuyau, et puis par groupes sur le même clavier ; ils ont été ensuite comparés de clavier à clavier et enfin groupés tous ensemble. Ces différents essais ont fait reconnaître : que dans tous ces jeux se trouvent réalisées les conditions les plus désirables de timbre, d'égalité, de douceur, de rondeur et de force.

La sonorité générale présente, à son tour, une grande puissance, bien homogène, unie à beaucoup de suavité et de fraîcheur, ainsi qu'une majestueuse ampleur, qui n'exclut pas une extrême délicatesse.

La Commission a été frappée de la beauté et la distinction des jeux de fond, à l'harmonie bien ronde et veloutée, dont

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les basses parlent avec une plénitude, une netteté et une pureté de son ravissantes, tout en conservant, jusqu'à la note la plus inférieure, le caractère du jeu auquel elles appartiennent.

Les jeux à anche se distinguent par leur sonorité énergique et bien brillante, ainsi que par une finesse de son et une netteté d'attaque peu ordinaires.

La Commission a remarqué en outre : que le facteur, en établissant un grand nombre de jeux de détail qui se présentent avec des timbres individuels frappants de vérité, avait su différencier, par des nuances délicates, les jeux d'une même famille appartenant à divers claviers; ces nuances distinctives, qui n'enlèvent rien au caractère essentiel de ces jeux, constituent des sources nouvelles de variété dans la majestueuse unité harmonique de l'ensemble.

Si, au milieu de ces richesses acoustiques il est permis de faire des distinctions, nous signalerons :

1° *Au Grand-Orgue*, les superbes *montres de seize et de huit pieds*, celle-ci au timbre vigoureux et bien chantant; le *bourdon de huit pieds* à la sonorité pleine et bien arrondie; l'excellent jeu de *gambe de huit pieds*, au timbre parfait dans toute son étendue, qui fait sentir le coup d'archet du violoncelle; le *plein jeu* (fourniture et cymbale), brillant sans aigreur, lequel mêlé aux jeux de fond donne à l'orgue son vrai caractère archaïque; la *trompette* et le *clairon* harmoniques, en chamade, dont la sonorité, plus puissante, plus ronde et plus brillante que celle des autres jeux d'anche, se détache avec une certaine crânerie sur la sonorité générale; ces jeux, qui forment un appoint remarquable dans le grand chœur, peuvent encore être utilisés en solos, d'un certain caractère, à cause de leur belle qualité de son;

2° *Au Positif.* — Le *salicional de huit pieds*, d'une sonorité délicate, caressante et bien pénétrante, quoique plus tempérée que celle du même jeu du Grand-Orgue; le *cor de nuit de huit pieds*, à la sonorité douce et un peu voilée, qui ne manque pas de rondeur; l'*Unda Maris de huit pieds*, jeu ondulant, singulier, de la famille des voix célestes, mais aux accents plus doux et à l'allure calme et tranquille; le *carillon*, aux heureux effets cristallins, qui rappellent les jeux percutants de timbres et d'harmonica; le *basson-haut-bois*, dont la sonorité belle et distinguée, d'une vérité de timbre absolue, rappelle si bien les instruments d'orchestre de même nom; la *trompette* et le *clairon*, qui possèdent les qualités de netteté, de rondeur, de brillant et de finesse des mêmes jeux du Grand-Orgue, mais avec plus de délicatesse.

3° *Au Récit.* — La *voix humaine*, parfaite d'imitation; le *quintaton de seize pieds*, au timbre original, un peu creux avec du mordant, et qui rappelle la vieille sonorité de l'orgue; le *diapason de huit pieds*, plus vigoureux que la montre française ordinaire et fort en usage dans la facture anglaise; la *voix céleste de huit pieds*, jeu ondulant, de même espèce que l'*Unda Maris* du Positif, mais qui se distingue de celui-ci par une allure un peu plus vive avec des accents expressifs et passionnés; la *flûte octaviante de quatre pieds*, plus délicate que la flûte harmonique, et dont la délicate sonorité, d'un velouté et d'une finesse achevés, rappelle avantageusement la flûte Boehm d'orchestre; la *trompette* et le *clairon* harmoniques, à la sonorité fine et distinguée, dont les puissants dessus parlent nettement, sans aigreur, jusqu'à la note la plus élevée; la *clarinette de huit pieds*, d'un très beau caractère et d'une vérité d'imitation remarquable, articulant bien avec netteté, rondeur et douceur.

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4° *Au Pédalier.* — La *flûte ou contrebasse de seize pieds* d'une puissante et belle sonorité, parlant bien, avec plénitude et profondeur; le *violoncelle, de huit pieds* dont la sonorité particulière, nette et vigoureuse, possède, avec plus de rondeur, le mordant caractéristique de la famille des gambes; la *bombarde, de trente-deux pieds*, dont la puissante sonorité a acquis, par son rajeunissement, cette netteté d'articulation et cette belle rondeur, sans crudité ni ferraillement, qui lui faisaient défaut.

Mais il est temps de s'arrêter, sous peine de tout citer; car tout, dans cette superbe partie de l'orgue, mériterait d'être signalé en détail.

Après avoir entendu et apprécié soit séparément, soit dans leurs diverses combinaisons d'ensemble toutes les parties harmoniques de l'orgue, le 2 avril et le lendemain, jour de l'inauguration, alors que la foule débordait de toutes parts dans la vaste basilique, la Commission a été unanime à reconnaître: que la sonorité de cet instrument était suffisamment puissante, sans excès, pour remplir de sons majestueux, suaves et distingués, toutes les parties de cette basilique; elle a constaté, en même temps et avec la même unanimité, que cette sonorité, par la plénitude et la rondeur des jeux de fond, la variété des jeux de détail aux timbres frappants de vérité et la puissance mâle et grandiose du grand chœur, rehaussée par les brillants jeux en chamade, ne laissait rien à désirer.

IV. — Conclusion.

D'après tout ce qui précède, la Commission reconnaît, à l'unanimité, que non seulement M. A. Cavaillé-Coll a rempli avec une exactitude et une loyauté parfaites toutes ses obligations envers la fabrique de Saint-Sernin, mais qu'il les a volontairement outrepassées, d'une façon large et généreuse, ne s'inspirant en cela que de l'intérêt supérieur de l'art et dans l'unique but d'élever, au plus haut point de perfection dont elle était susceptible, l'œuvre importante et difficile qui lui avait été confiée.

Elle estime, en conséquence, qu'il y a lieu de recevoir le grand orgue de la basilique de Saint-Sernin, et elle se plaît à donner à M. Cavaillé-Coll les plus grands éloges pour ce magnifique travail, qui tiendra désormais un rang distingué parmi les œuvres les plus belles et les plus admirées dont cet éminent facteur a enrichi la France et les principales villes de l'Europe.

La Commission croirait manquer à son devoir si elle n'adressait, en même temps, un témoignage particulier de sa haute satisfaction à M. Félix Reinburg, élève et collaborateur de M. Cavaillé-Coll, qui a si habilement dirigé le montage du grand orgue et fait l'harmonisation de cet instrument, ainsi que le relevage et la réharmonisation de l'orgue d'accompagnement. En félicitant ce spécialiste, qui s'est distingué depuis longtemps dans l'harmonisation d'un grand nombre de beaux instruments, notamment : ceux de Sheffield, en Angleterre, de soixante-quatre jeux ; du Palais du Tro-

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cadéro, à Paris, de soixante-six jeux ; de la cathédrale d'Orléans, de cinquante-quatre jeux, etc., etc., la Commission rend encore un nouvel hommage au talent supérieur du maître incomparable qui a su former de tels collaborateurs.

V. Restauration de l'orgue d'accompagnement.

Bien que l'orgue d'accompagnement ait été reçu à la date du 29 juin 1887, par une commission spéciale composée de MM. Courrèges, O. Guiraud et Th. Dutrey, membres de la commission actuelle de réception du grand orgue, nous en dirons cependant quelques mots afin de montrer, de nouveau, que pour le relevage, la mise au ton normal et la réharmonisation générale de cet instrument, M. Cavaillé-Coll a satisfait pleinement et loyalement, comme pour la reconstruction du grand orgue, à toutes les obligations qui lui étaient imposées par son devis, et que, loin de se borner à leur exacte observation, il est allé au-delà, de son plein gré, en ajoutant aux travaux prévus, des travaux supplémentaires très-avantageux, dont nous allons brièvement rappeler les plus saillants, d'après le rapport et les témoignages de la Commission spéciale plus haut désignée :

La soufflerie a été améliorée par la modification de son levier de manœuvre et l'addition de six soupapes aux pompes.

Un antiseousse a été placé sur le porte-vent. La *flûte octaviante* du Grand-Orgue, qui a été remplacée par un jeu nouveau de *prestant*, a pris au Récit, la place du jeu de *dulciana*, qui a dû être supprimé à cause de son extrême et

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irréremédiable faiblesse. La puissance de cette flûte a été notablement accrue dans sa nouvelle position, par le repoussement de deux tuyaux dans les basses et l'allongement des dessus afin de les rendre homogènes. Cette double opération a donné à la sonorité générale plus d'homogénéité, de mordant et de brillant. Grâce à ces additions, ainsi qu'aux diverses améliorations dont toute la partie résonnante, notamment, a été l'objet, et qu'il serait trop long d'énumérer ici, l'harmonie générale de cet instrument s'est trouvée très heureusement fortifiée et perfectionnée; la puissance sonore, surtout, s'est accrue dans une notable et surprenante proportion qu'un relevage seul ne suffirait pas à expliquer, quoique l'effet du relevage se fasse toujours sentir dans une certaine mesure. Cet orgue possède aujourd'hui une sonorité puissante, sans excès, avec une plénitude, une rondeur et une distinction remarquables, qui ont pu faire croire, un instant, à la présence d'un nouvel instrument.

Quand on considère les difficultés sans nombre résultant de l'emplacement exigü (non susceptible d'agrandissement) dans lequel ont été originellement placés tous les jeux, on n'a pas de peine à comprendre que les belles qualités qui distinguent la sonorité actuelle ne peuvent être que le fruit du talent et de l'expérience consommés avec lesquels ont été conçues et réalisées les modifications et les améliorations plus haut rappelées.

Aussi, l'ensemble du travail exécuté à l'orgue d'accompagnement de Saint-Sernin a-t-il été reçu avec de grands éloges pour M. Cavallé-Coll et son habile collaborateur. La Commission de réception du grand orgue, qui, à son tour, vient d'apprécier l'excellence des résultats précédemment énumé-

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rés, ne peut que s'associer pleinement à ces éloges et constater, une fois de plus, qu'ils sont bien mérités par ceux qui en ont été l'objet.

Toulouse, le 6 avril 1889.

Le Secrétaire rapporteur,

J.-B. COURRÈGES.

ONT SIGNÉ :

MM. E.-A. LEGOUX, *président*.

ALEX. GUILMANT.

L. DEFFÈS,

J. LEYBACH.

A. KUNC.

O. GUIRAUD.

MM. TH. DUTREY.

H. BACH.

P. LAPEYRE.

F. TORTAT.

J. ESQUIROL.

V. DOUZON.



COMPOSITION

DE

L'ORGUE DE SAINT-SERNIN

1° Nomenclature des Jeux.

1^{er} CLAVIER. GRAND-ORGUE, *Ut à Sol* : 56 notes.

JEUX DE FOND.		
1. Montre	8 pieds.	41. Doublette..... 2 pieds.
2. Montre	16 —	42. Fourniture..... 5 rangs.
3. Salicional	8 —	43. Cymbale..... 4 —
4. Prestant	4 —	44. Grand cornet..... 5 —
5. Bourdon	8 —	45. Bombarde..... 16 pieds.
6. Bourdon	16 —	46. Trompette..... 8 —
7. Gambe..... 8 —		47. Clairon..... 4 —
8. Flûte octaviante..... 4 —		48. Clairon doublette..... 2 —
9. Flûte harmonique..... 8 —		49. Trompette-harmonique.. 8 —
		20. Clairon-harmonique.... 4 —
JEUX DE COMBINAISON.		
10. Quinte..... 3 pieds.		

NOTA. — Les jeux 19 et 20 sont posés en chamade.

2^e CLAVIER. POSITIF, *Ut à Sol* : 56 notes.

JEUX DE FOND.		
1. Montre..... 8 pieds.		6. Salicional
2. Prestant..... 4 —		7. Carillon..... 3 rangs.
3. Un-la-Maris..... 8 —		
4. Cor de nuit (bourdon) .. 8 —		JEUX A ANCHE.
5. Flûte douce..... 4 —		8. Basson-hautbois..... 8 pieds.
		9. Trompette..... 8 —
		10. Clairon..... 4 —

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5. V

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2^o Posit
3^o Récit
4^o Pé-la

To

3^e CLAVIER. RÉCIT EXPRESSIF, *Ut à Sol* : 56 notes.

JEUX DE FOND.		8. Voix-céleste.....		8 pieds.
1. Voix humaine	8 pieds.	9. Octavin-harmonique....	2 —	
2. Basson-hautbois	8 —	JEUX DE COMBINAISON.		
3. Viole de Gambe.....	8 —	10. Cornet.....	5 rangs.	
4. Flûte harmonique.....	8 —	11. Bombarde.....	16 pieds.	
5. Flûte octavante.....	4 —	12. Trompette-harmonique..	8 —	
6. Diapason	8 —	13. Clarinette.....	8 —	
7. Quintaton (jou bouché)...	16 —	14. Clairon-harmonique....	4 —	

4^e CLAVIER. PÉDALES, *Ut à Fa* : 30 notes.

JEUX DE FOND.		6. Flûte.....		4 pieds.
1. Flûte ouverte.....	16 pieds.	JEUX A ANCHE.		
2. Grosse quinte.....	12 —	7. Contre-bombarde.....	32 pieds.	
3. Soubasse	16 —	8. Bombarde.....	16 —	
4. Grosse flûte.....	8 —	9. Trompette	8 —	
5. Violoncelle.....	8 —	10. Clairon.....	4 —	

RÉSUMÉ DU NOMBRE DE JEUX ET DE TUYAUX

DANS LEURS INTONATIONS RESPECTIVES.

NOMS des CLAVIERS.	JEUX DE										NOMBRE DE	
	32 p.	16 p.	12 p.	8 p.	4 p.	2 p. 2/3	2 p.	Cornet.	Plein jeu.	Jeux.	Tuyaux	
1 ^o Grand orgue...	»	3	»	7	4	1	2	1 5 rangs	2 9 rangs	20	1616	
2 ^o Positif.....	»	»	»	6	3	»	»	»	1 3 rangs	10	622	
3 ^o Récit expressif.	»	2	»	8	2	»	1	1 5 rangs	»	14	876	
4 ^o Pédales.....	1	3	1	3	2	»	»	»	»	10	300	
TOTAUX....	1	8	1	24	11	1	3	2 10 rangs	3 12 rangs	54	3414	

NIN

2 pieds.

5 rangs.

4 —

5 —

16 pieds.

8 —

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2 —

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et posés en

8 pieds.

3 rangs.

8 pieds.

8 —

4 —

2° Pédales

ET REGISTRES DE COMBINAISON.

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|--|---|
| 1. Effets d'orage. | 12. Tremolo des jeux du Récit. |
| 2. Octaves aiguës du Pédalier. | 13. Octaves graves pneumatiques du Grand-Orgue. |
| 3. Tirasses des basses du Grand-Orgue par le Pédalier. | 14. Copula Grand-Orgue à l'unisson. |
| 4. Tirasses du Positif par le Pédalier. | 15. — Positif au Grand-Orgue. |
| 5. — du Récit — | 16. — Récit au Grand-Orgue. |
| 6. Appel des anches de la Pédale. | 17. — Positif au Récit. |
| 7. — du Grand-Orgue. | 18. — octaves graves du Récit. |
| 8. — du Positif. | 19. — Récit à l'unisson. |
| 9. — du Récit. | 20. — Positif à l'unisson (registre). |
| 10. Appel des jeux en chamade. | 21. Octaves graves du Positif (registre). |
| 11. Expression des jeux du Récit. | |

NOTA. — Les numéros 20 et 21 sont mis en mouvement au moyen de boutons de registre.

3° Soufflerie.

La soufflerie alimentaire est double et peut renfermer 10000,00 litres d'air comprimé à deux pressions initiales différentes ; elle est pourvue de quatre paires de pompes fournissant, ensemble, un minimum de 400 litres d'air par seconde.

Chaque corps de soufflerie comprend deux grands réservoirs ; il existe, en outre, dans l'intérieur de l'orgue, et à proximité des sommiers, seize autres réservoirs régulateurs de pression du vent.



GRAND ORGUE

DE L'INSIGNE BASILIQUE SAINT-SERNIN DE TOULOUSE

RECONSTRUIT

Par **M. A. CAVAILLÉ-COLL,**

Officier de la Légion d'honneur, Chevalier de l'Ordre de Saint-Grégoire-le-Grand,
Facteur de grandes Orgues, à Paris.

INAUGURATION SOLENNELLE

LE MERCREDI 3 AVRIL 1889

Par **M. Alexandre GUILMANT,**

Commandeur de l'Ordre de Saint-Grégoire-le-Grand,
Organiste de l'église de la Trinité et de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris,
Membre du Collège des Organistes de Londres.

I.

PSAUME : **Laudate Dominum in sanctis.**

BÉNÉDICTION DE L'ORGUE

Par SON ÉMINENCE MONSIEUR DESPREZ,

Cardinal-Archevêque de Toulouse.

1. **Marche triomphale** LEMMENS.
M. O. GUIRAUD, organiste titulaire de l'Insigne Basilique.
2. **Prélude** sur les jeux de fonds LEMMENS.
M. Alex. GUILMANT.
3. **Première Sonate** (Symphonie) Alex. GUILMANT.
I. Largo e maestoso. Allegro. II. Pastorale. III. Finale.
M. Alex. GUILMANT.
4. a) **Andantino**, en ré bémol CHAUVET.
b) **Canon**, en si mineur SCHUMANN.
M. Alex. GUILMANT.
5. **Ave Maria** Alex. GUILMANT.
Chanté par M. BENJAMIN.
6. **Fantaisie et Fugue**, en sol mineur J. S. BACH.

II.

1. **Scherzo symphonique** Alex. GUILMANT.
M. Alex. GUILMANT.
2. **Magnificat**, chant, avec versets, improvisés
par M. A. GUILMANT.

SALUT DU SAINT-SACREMENT

3. **O Salutaris**, chant MARTINI.
DE LALANDE.
4. **Tantum Ergo**, chant Surintendant de la musique de
Louis XIV et de Louis XV.
Th. DUBOIS.
5. **Toccata**, en sol M. Alex. GUILMANT.

Exécution des chants par la Maîtrise paroissiale, sous la direction de M. DUTREY,
maître de chapelle.

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